

HELEN TREVERIAN

JOHN ROY



HELEN TREVERYAN

OR

THE RULING RACE

BY

JOHN ROY

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III

London

MACMILLAN AND CO.

AND NEW YORK

1892

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CHAPTER XXXIV

SIEGE OF SHERPUR

THE enemy did not attack the cantonment that night, and Guy Langley woke up next morning to find that everything was quiet and looked much as usual.

Everything, however, was not as usual. The cantonment had been surrounded by the enemy, except on the northern side where the level plain afforded no shelter. Behind the crumbling mud walls and broken forts which in our confidence we had left standing, in pits and ditches, under every sort of cover, the Afghan marksmen lay and watched. Soon after daybreak they opened a desultory fire, and this was kept up all day long. Farther away the rude banners of the insurgents fluttered on the hill-tops, and at times bodies of men could be seen moving about them and waving their swords. But the enemy were too busy in the city to attack that day, and practically there was no fighting. It was a welcome respite, for it enabled the engineers to correct and complete by daylight our hasty lines of defences.

For more than a week this state of affairs continued without much change. The force could hardly be said to be shut up. Troops moved out frequently, and when they did so the enemy at once gave ground. Occasionally messengers got through their lines into or out of the cantonment. The bare plain to the north and north-west was always open to our cavalry, who were out daily. Nor were the enemy's efforts very vehement. All day long they fired away, and after a day or two the fire grew heavier, and there were more casualties; but they made no real attempt to dislodge us. At sunset the firing stopped, and though every night an attack was expected, no attack was delivered. Nevertheless the force was fairly paralysed, and the position was sufficiently humiliating. The city was in the occupation of the insurgents, who were gutting the houses of our friends, and even our outlying forts had been abandoned. If our troops sallied out and drove the enemy back a few hundred yards, they reoccupied their former positions as our men retired. The victorious force had been brought to bay. We had received a severe lesson, if an old one; we had despised our enemy.

Still the situation was by no means desperate. Five or six thousand good troops in a position too large for them indeed, but defended on three sides by a massive mud wall fifteen or twenty feet high, and on the fourth side by a rapidly-growing line of trench and abattis along the face of a stony hill, might fairly

be expected to hold their own, so long as food and ammunition lasted, against any number of ill-armed tribesmen. If the enemy had had any guns, they could have searched every foot of the open low-lying cantonment, but they had none. There was food for a considerable time, and a fair quantity of ammunition, though not too much. Above all, there was confidence. The force had no doubt been surprised, and to some extent humiliated, by the unexpected incidents of the past week. Just after the overthrow of our cavalry and guns, while the north side was quite open and all the gateways unblocked, there had even been some anxiety, and here and there a few long faces might have been seen; but in a day or two all trace of apprehension had disappeared. Men ate and drank and laughed and chatted as if the whole thing were a big picnic. It was annoying to be mobbed and flouted by the enemy we had despised, but the inconvenience was only temporary. Reinforcements would come from India, and then we should have troops enough both to hold the cantonment and to take the field, and we would give it them with a vengeance. Far better have too many of the enemy for a little while than not have any enemy at all.

Baillie's Horse had lost two or three men, and had several down with wounds and sickness, and they had endured the mortification of seeing their own quarters in the hands of the Afghans. Nevertheless they were cheerful enough. They quite understood the situation,

and all alike,—Englishmen and Sikhs, Hindus and Mahometans—were content to wait for their revenge. They took their share with the infantry now in lining the trench to the north-east, and the men smiled and showed their white teeth when Guy spoke to them, as if it were all a very excellent joke. Many of them had seen service before, and knew that even British troops cannot have everything their own way. It would not be any real sport if they could.

Gulab Singh fairly roared with laughter over it all. 'Do you remember, Sahib,' he said in his deep rough voice, 'a week ago we could not find an enemy? We were turning over all the stones for them. Now see, the whole plain is like a bazar. Ah, *shábásh!* *shábásh!* ! What a *tamásha* there will be when we get out,' and the long grizzled beard upon his portly bosom wagged with his mirth. It was the same everywhere. Tommy Atkins, in his snug room under the wall, said 'It was the first time he had ever heered of a blooming General being confined to barracks'; and then Tommy sang sentimental and melancholy songs, a sure indication of inward happiness. And the little Ghoorkhas gibbered and grinned, and held athletic meetings in front of their huts, as if there was not an enemy within miles.

The worst of it was the cold at night for the troops lying out. It was bitter work sleeping in the moonlit trenches, even when rolled up in a waterproof sheet and blanket. There was a keen north wind on the

hill-side, and at times the sky clouded over and snow fell, and the sleeping forms were covered. One woke very chilled and stiff, and very thankful for a cup of hot soup or cocoa.

Guy Langley himself was well and happy. He liked his men, and felt that they had got to trust him ; and he was also conscious that he had earned the approval of his seniors. Even MacPherson spoke to him now as if he were a person to be taken seriously. His one regret was the feeling that Helen would be in dreadful trouble. In India they would imagine all sorts of horrors when they heard the force was besieged. They could not know how matters really stood. But it was no use fretting about that. Another brigade was marching up from India, and when it arrived all would be well. She would soon know.

One afternoon, when the siege had lasted some days, Guy walked over with Lawrence to the western end of the cantonment to see what was going on. It was getting rather slow in their quarter. They had no enemy in their front to the north, and though the *pop, pop* of the musketry was incessant they were seeing very little of the fun.

They got into the broad main road which ran down the centre of the cantonment from east to west, and stepped out briskly for the headquarters gateway. As they walked they saw an occasional bullet flick up the ground on their left. Fired at the top of the wall, the enemy's bullets fell all day long on the enclosed plain

inside it; but the zone of fire was pretty well known and avoided.

‘That’s one beauty of having lots of room,’ Guy said. ‘Of course MacPherson is right enough about the cantonment being too big for our force, but if it was a quarter the size we should lose more men. Now, if you keep close under the wall or well in the middle, you’re as safe as a church.’

‘Yes,’ Lawrence answered; ‘it’s ever so much jollier not being squashed up. Hallo!’ he went on with a laugh, ‘how about being as safe as a church?’

Something had gone singing past their heads and struck the hard earth on their right not twenty yards away.

‘That must be from a rifle,’ Guy said; ‘let’s go and see.’

They walked across, and Lawrence found the missile at once, a clean little Martini bullet, lying on the surface. He put it in his breeches pocket. ‘I shall keep that,’ he said, ‘and send it to my old mater. She will think it no end of a treasure.’

When they got near the gateway there was evidently something going on. There had been a little sunshine, and our signallers had been sending heliographic messages from the roof to the Latabund post on the Peshawar road twenty miles away. The post was held by a stout old Christian soldier, Hudson of the Twenty-Ninth Native Infantry. His defences consisted of a low wall of piled stones, and his force was

small, but he cared nothing for that. There lay his duty. No sign of unsteadiness or alarm where he held command.

Several officers were standing about the gateway in their *posteens*.

‘What’s up?’ Guy said to one of them. ‘Any news?’

‘Yes. I don’t know what it is exactly. Something about Gough. All the swells are in the General’s quarters. They’ve been jawing away like blazes for the last half-hour.’

Guy and Lawrence waited a few minutes on the chance of hearing something more, and then got tired of it. ‘Come on, Lawrie,’ Guy said; ‘I daresay they will manage to settle it without us. Let’s get on the rampart and have a look round.’

They made their way up and looked over the parapet at the brown plain below. There was snow in patches here and there. ‘I should like to go and kick the beggars out of our quarters,’ Lawrence remarked, gazing wistfully away to the south-west, towards the walled enclosure that had once belonged to Baillie’s Horse. ‘How it will stink when we get in again!’

Then there was a puff of smoke on the wall, and the unmistakable prolonged *ping-g-g* of a rifle-bullet over their heads. ‘Well, I’m hanged,’ he went on, ‘if that isn’t adding insult to injury! Fancy getting sniped at from our own quarters.’

‘Come down, old chap. That must be another Martini. They may get the range next time.’

Lawrence stepped down from the *banquette*. ‘The parapet’s very low,’ he said.

‘Yes. Some one told me they had to cut it down for the Ghorkhas; they couldn’t see over it. What ugly little monkeys they are !’

‘They’re rare good little soldiers though, and they hate the Afghans like poison.’

‘Yes; I believe they do. A regiment of them got cut up here in the old war, and they fight *con amore*. They are always good friends with Tommy too. But they are a bit spoilt, I think.’

The young men strolled on until they got near the south-west bastion. There were some broken walls within short range at this point, and firing was going on. A few of the enemy had planted a red flag on a low mud wall a couple of hundred yards off, and were steadily pounding away at anything that showed above the parapet. They saw Guy and Lawrence looking over, and fired two shots at them.

‘Slugs,’ Lawrence said, as the slow buzz went over their heads. ‘I don’t know how they expect to hit you with those things. I picked up two or three the other day. They are just chunks of lead, like bits cut off a stick of liquorice.’

It was no good shooting at the Afghan marksmen whom Lawrence despised. They had bored holes at the foot of the wall, and fired from a pit in the ground,

so that they were completely covered. Our men were sitting here and there with their backs against the parapet, smoking and chatting. A tall Pathán gunner belonging to a mountain-battery came stalking along the rampart with his head very high indeed. He was a fine, square-shouldered, clean-built man, with courage and pride in every line of his face. As he went a shot was fired at him and struck the top of the parapet within a yard or two, knocking up some dust.

‘That was close,’ Guy said to him as he came up. ‘Take care, or they will get you.’

The man smiled and twisted up his moustaches. ‘No, Sahib. These people are no use,’ he said contemptuously. ‘They do that all day and never hit any one.’ The statement was not quite accurate, but it was a sound principle to go upon.

A little farther on they found a shooting-party on the look-out. There was not ammunition enough to let the men go on firing as they pleased, and volleys were more effective. A small squad of British infantry were kneeling by the parapet with their rifles in their hands, and an officer was standing by them with his glasses over the top, watching something in the distance. Suddenly he gave a word of command, and the men sprang up. Guy saw a score or so of Afghans leave the shelter of a high bit of wall and trot across towards another wall fifty yards off; as they got into the open a volley rang out, and two men fell, while a number of bullets hit up the ground close by them.

A hot fire was immediately opened upon our people from other neighbouring bits of cover, and some of the Afghans ran back and pluckily carried the fallen men under shelter. One of the rescuers was himself shot in doing so, and himself carried off by others. The officer with the squad was laughing gently. 'We scored one that time,' he said. 'I think I got the distance rather well.'

Guy and Lawrence walked on a little farther, but there was no serious fighting to be seen, so they went and looked up a friend or two, and returned to their own tents. They had spent a pleasant afternoon, but they agreed that it was much better sport fighting on horseback than potting away at Afghans with a rifle.

'I should not like to shoot a man,' Lawrence said. 'It would make me feel awfully sick to see the poor devil kicking on the ground like a black buck, and to know I had done it.'

'Yes; I expect it would. All the same, you didn't seem to mind killing that fellow the other day.'

'He would have killed me if I hadn't; and it's different somehow in a scrimmage, when your blood's up. Besides——'

'What?'

Lawrence was looking troubled.

'I daresay you'll laugh,' he said at last, and Guy could see him flush through his fair, tanned skin to the roots of his curly hair, 'but do you know I would give a good deal not to have done it.'

‘Would you really?’

‘Yes. I can’t get it out of my head. His face was so ghastly, and he gave a sort of horrible gasp when it went into him. I wish to God I had only wounded him.’

Lawrence’s voice was rather unsteady.

‘You’re a good chap, Lawrie,’ Guy said, ‘but you must not take it like that. I daresay he helped to murder Cavagnari.’

Lawrence was silent for a little. ‘I wish I were sure of that. I suppose you think me an awful ass.’

‘No, I don’t; but you know you had to do it.’

‘Yes, I know. All the same, I’ll never do it again if I can help it.’

They walked on in silence until they reached their tents.

A day or two later the long-expected attack was at last delivered. It was known that Gough’s brigade was within a couple of marches, and the Afghans determined to try one rush before the two forces joined. Why they did not attack the two thousand men in the open instead of the five thousand behind a strong wall is not easy to understand. Perhaps they only wanted to make a demonstration for their honour’s sake. Perhaps they were not sufficiently under control.

However that may be, on the night of the 22nd of December our spies brought information that a grand assault was to be made at daybreak, and that the

signal would be the lighting of a beacon fire on the Asmai heights to the westward. There had been so many false alarms that every one was doubtful about this story; but the necessary orders were issued, and the force was kept in readiness. Shortly before day-break the signal was given. Guy Langley had been awake and on the look-out for an hour or more, and had just shared with Bradford a jorum of hot cocoa. 'By Jove, that is good stuff!' he said. 'I feel ever so much better. I wonder whether they really mean business to-day. If so, it is about time for them to be lighting up. It is half-past five.'

He turned to the westward, and as he did so, there was a flicker in the darkness, where the rugged top of the Asmai hill could just be made out. For an instant there was perfect silence, then, as the flame caught and flared, there rose from the men around him a low involuntary 'Ah-h!' such as one may sometimes hear at Lord's when a dangerous wicket goes down. Then in the distance two musket-shots rang out, and after them a few more; but along the cantonment wall all was silent. Men stood with beating hearts awaiting the onslaught. For some minutes the suspense lasted, and then suddenly there burst from the darkness a wild storm of yells, 'Allah, Allah, Allah!' and fifty thousand Afghans came with a rush at the wall, shouting and firing. The cantonment was surrounded by a broad continuous ring of rifle-flashes, and over the parapet and over the trenches on the hill the bullets

began to stream. There was no doubt about it now. You could hear this shower sing in the wind. Then our troops took up the music, and there broke out a continuous roll of breechloading fire, which sounded like the grinding of a huge coffee-mill, and for a minute or two fairly drowned the Afghan musketry.

Baillie's Horse were doing their share of the work. They held a long piece of trench on the north-east side of the hill, and in the darkness a considerable number of the enemy had occupied a low line of ruined wall and ditch below. Their fire was heavy. Most of it passed over the trench and over the crest of the hill, but many shots struck the hill-side, and as the officers walked up and down behind the lines of trench where the men were lying, it seemed to Guy that they could not long escape without casualties. There was one incessant whizz and spatter of lead.

But still minute after minute they remained untouched, and still the enemy delayed the final rush which they were all awaiting, and awaiting with an impatience not wholly free from anxiety. There might be thousands of men down there in the darkness facing their little line. A few star shells were fired over them, and in the momentary glare they were seen to be in large numbers ; but it was difficult to make out anything accurately.

The Colonel was as cool as if the whole thing had been a field-day. He strolled up and down talking cheerily to officers and men, and restraining the fire.

MacPherson was good too, but he was growling; he wanted to get at the hogs.

Not long after daybreak it became clear that the attack had not been pushed home at any single point. The firing was very heavy on the south side and elsewhere, but looking through their glasses Graham and his officers could see that everywhere the enemy was stationary. Then they knew the danger was practically over. The one fear had been a swamping rush in the darkness, which, if successful at any one point, might have caused confusion and disaster throughout the long cantonment. In the daylight it was almost impossible for any Afghan force to advance into the open against walls and trenches lined with breechloaders. In fact, they soon began to give ground. In front of Baillie's Horse the cover was not sufficient for more than a few hundreds, and thick groups of men who had been crouching down below in the darkness were seen streaming off to safer country when it became light enough for them to be made out. As they went several volleys were fired at them, and some fell and were carried off by their friends. On the other hand, the fire of those who remained became more accurate and effective. First a young Pathán, who was to the manner born and had been firing away at his countrymen with much coolness and enjoyment, was shot through the head and killed. His carbine fell over the front of the trench, and rolled some feet down the hill-side, which was steep at

this point. Lawrence, who had been lying down by the Colonel's orders, walked out and brought it back ; and the enemy shouted and fired at him.

Hardly a minute afterwards Greene, who commanded Lawrence's squadron, was hit in the arm, and had to be taken away ; then two more men were wounded, one of them badly in the hand. Something made him put his hand up to his head, and he looked dreadful, his face and chest covered with blood. Almost every shot now struck the hill-side within a few yards, and went off with a ricochet, knocking up splinters of gravel in all directions. However, the damage done was not very great, and the men soon got accustomed to it. As the Colonel remarked, there is a great deal of room for bullets outside one. Guy himself suffered nothing more than a little indignity from some earth hit into his face ; it stung, but did him no harm. The Colonel was the last man touched ; he had exposed himself rather more than necessary, but escaped unhurt for some hours. At last, as he stood quietly looking through his glasses at some groups of men on the hills away to the left, he suddenly threw up his arm and fell backwards.

He was not far from Guy at the moment, and Guy jumped up and ran to him, fearing he was badly wounded ; but he was able to get up, and found that he was only bruised. A bullet, fired apparently from a distance, had struck him on the right shoulder, and had cut through the thick skin of his *posteen*, but had

not penetrated his clothes. When he opened his *posteen* it fell out of the sheepskin ; he stooped and picked it up. ‘Snider,’ he said ; ‘that was a shave ; but a miss is as good as a mile.’

‘It wasn’t a miss, sir,’ Guy answered ; and Mac-Pherson, who had come up, added gruffly : ‘I don’t see the use of exposing yourself like this, Colonel ; the next might not stop outside.’

Colonel Graham smiled. ‘All right, Mac,’ he said, ‘I will take care,’ and he strolled on.

Soon afterwards there was another attempt at a general assault, but it was made in a half-hearted way, and was easily repelled ; and then the regiment received an order which filled them with pleasure and excitement. Some cavalry and horse-artillery were to move out by the gorge on to the plain to the northward, and they were to form part of the force. Their place in the line was almost immediately taken by a body of native infantry, which had been in reserve, and they were soon ready. How pleasant it was to be mounted again, to feel a good horse under one, and to attack instead of being attacked ! Now it was their turn,—at last, after ten days.

Guy was riding a little Kataghani horse he had got in Kabul ; it was handier for work over rough ground, and had legs and feet like iron, and would go for ever.

As they emerged from the gorge, and out into the open ground to the north, the enemy who had occu-

pied the villages on the left of the cantonment began to fall back; and soon, pressed by infantry and horse-artillery, they were retiring rapidly towards the city. Then the cavalry covered the plain out to the eastward, and drove the flying Afghans back into the broken country, and crowned the bare heights of the Siah Sung on our left front, where the old camp had been. They were all full of eagerness, and pushed forward vigorously, delighted to be once more on the offensive.

But it is possible to be too eager. They had not been long in possession of the heights on the flank of the retiring enemy when the Afghans, who quite understood the helplessness of cavalry on bad ground unsupported, threw out a strong body of footmen and attacked with considerable spirit. They swarmed up the rocky spurs on the western side of the heights, and opened a fusilade, before which the cavalry were forced to retire. It was a soldierly thing to do in the middle of a retreat, and the movement was smartly executed.

Guy Langley's squadron was on the extreme left of our cavalry advance, and had ridden right round the heights. They were leisurely moving along under the southern slopes when the check occurred, and their view impeded by rolling and broken ground, they did not at once realise what was happening. Hearing the fire grow hot, they pushed forward and upward until they emerged on a plateau which was within rifle-

shot of the advancing enemy. It was soon evident that the squadron could not get at them, on account of the deep stony *nullahs* which separated the different spurs. On their right Bradford and Guy could see the rest of the regiment beginning to fall back. Bradford tried to check the Afghans with carbine-fire, but their numbers were too great. Then he realised that a body of the enemy was making a push to get on to a point which commanded his line of retreat. Some scores of men were running hard to a rocky hillock which the squadron would have to pass at short range, with nothing but a deep ravine between. It was an awkward fix, and they had to retire at a canter, getting rather heavily peppered meanwhile.

However, all went well until they were opposite the knoll. The bulk of the squadron got safely past, and Bradford, who had pulled up facing the enemy until all should be clear, was just turning his horse to follow. It looked as if they were going to get off scot-free.

Just at that moment a few of the foremost among the men who were running up saw that they were too late to intercept the retreat. They stopped and fired a hasty volley, and Bradford's horse was shot through the neck, and went down like a stone. There was a shout, and some more shots, and then to Guy's horror he saw Bradford lying on the ground within a few yards of the *nullah*, while some of the enemy had

dashed forward, and were half-way down the side, evidently with the hope of despatching him.

Guy had only time to shout a word of warning to the men nearest him, and then he galloped back to where Bradford was lying. As he did so, he saw Bradford raise himself on his knees in a dazed kind of way and pick up his helmet, which had fallen off. 'Look out, Bradford, look out!' Guy shouted as he galloped up; 'they're close to you.'

Bradford sprang up with sudden understanding in his face, but as he did so half a dozen shots were fired from the other side of the *nullah*, and he staggered and fell again. Almost at the same moment a big clansman rose from the *nullah* with his *chûra* in his hand and ran forward, closely followed by a second.

There was only one chance. Guy drove his horse straight at the nearest man, and as he jumped aside slashed at him with a fierce back stroke. The Afghan tried to disable him by striking up at his sword arm, and narrowly missed doing so. Guy, less scientific but more lucky, got the Afghan across the neck and brought him down. There was no time to get a blow at the second assailant, but the handy, game little horse answered at once to the desperate pressure of his rider's legs, and catching the man fair with his shoulder, sent him rolling over and over on the ground. Before he was up a *sowar's* lance was through his body.

The whole thing was over in a few seconds, and

Guy was back by the side of Bradford, who was again on his feet. He sprang forward, and catching hold of Guy's stirrup, called out, 'Come along, it's all right; only my arm.' There was a wild yell from the other side of the *nullah*, and several shots were fired, but without effect; and in a few seconds more they got over the brow of the spur. As they did so, a dozen more men came galloping back to help them, headed by old Gulab Singh, and the rest of the squadron were pulling up. They had turned the moment they realised that anything had happened, but only one man had seen Guy go back. He was a young fellow, hardly more than a boy, the son of a native officer, and a gentleman by birth. His unshaved beard made a soft, downy fringe round his face, and as a rule his eyes and manner were rather sleepy; now he looked bright and animated. Guy thanked him, and said, 'You helped us splendidly, Atar Singh. That fellow might have done for us both.'

The boy laughed. 'It was nothing, Sahib,' he said; 'my luck is very good.'

The enemy crowned the spur, shouting and firing, but it was too late, and they had no further loss.

Directly they were out of range they examined and bound up Bradford's arm. It was not very bad apparently, a clean flesh wound; when his horse fell he had not been wounded, only shaken and half-stunned. 'I don't know how to thank you, old

fellow,' he said ; 'but for you I should have been cut up to a certainty.'

'Oh no ; you were all right. Atar Singh was close up.'

'Not close enough. Well, it's no good talking about it ; you know what I feel.'

Bradford was able to ride, and they mounted him on a *sowar's* horse. As they moved on again, a big English officer rode up with half a dozen *sowars* at his heels. Guy recognised Major Russell.

'Are you all right ?' he said to Bradford.

'Yes, thank you, Major. A slug through the arm ; it's not bad. But I have had a shave ; Langley just saved me.'

'It was a shave ; I was out there watching the business with my glasses, and saw your affair quite clearly.' Then he turned to Guy : 'Well done, Langley ; I never saw anything better in my life, and I thought it was you. You ought to get a V.C. for it, and it won't be my fault if you don't.'

'A V.C., Major !' Guy said, and there came over him a flood of astonishment and delight which made his eyes shine.

'Oh, I have nothing on earth to say to it, of course ; and it may be out of the question. I am only telling you what I think myself. Any way, you did a fine thing.'

Russell rode away, leaving Guy's brain in a whirl of happiness. Could it really be possible that such

luck would come to him? A quarter of an hour ago nothing had happened; and now perhaps he had won what he would have given almost anything to win. It seemed too good to be true.

Bradford said, 'You see I was not far wrong; I shall do my level best any way.'

But there was no time for talking about Victoria Crosses. The firing was still going on; there was plenty of work for them before the day was over.

That night they took all the sleep they could get. They were tired with their day's work, and they were to go out again next morning. But before he turned in Guy sat for half an hour in the empty mess-tent writing a letter to his wife. Bradford had made the most of Guy's exploit, and every one in the regiment had been full of praise and cordiality. It had covered him with confusion, but it had made him very happy; and in his excitement and joy he felt he must write and tell her all about it.

The beginning of his letter was taken up with a description of the fighting during the past week. It ended as follows—

Now, my darling, I am going to tell you what I hope will make you very happy. You told me to bear my sword with honour, and your dear lips were laid upon it. Do you remember? I have never forgotten. To-day, when we had got round the Siah Sung heights we were hotly engaged, and being nearly surrounded on ground where cavalry could not act, we had to retire. While we were doing so Bradford's horse was shot, and he fell heavily, and was half-stunned. The squadron

was retiring at a canter over the brow of the hill, and I was the only one who saw him fall. I went back to help him, and was just in time to prevent his being despatched by two of the enemy, who came at him with their long knives. One of them I cut down, and the other I rode over ; one of the men came up just at the moment and ran him through. Then we got Bradford off ; he was wounded in the arm, but nothing serious. When we had got clear, Russell of the Quartermaster-General's Department rode up to us, and told us he had seen it all. He spoke very warmly, and ended by saying I ought to get a V.C. for it, and that it should not be his fault if I did not. Bradford has been very nice about it too, and so have the Colonel and the others. My darling, are you pleased, and are you a little proud of me ? I never thought of a V.C. when I did it, and I don't really see what else any one could have done ; I could not have ridden away and left him. But they seem to think I did well. My greatest pleasure in it all is the thought of you. I know you well enough to be sure that this letter will warm your heart. Of course I may not get the V.C. ; Russell warned me of that. You must not say a word about it to any one, and you must not be disappointed if it does not come. I never thought of it till he spoke. Whether it comes or not, I have done what you told me to do ; I have borne your sword with honour. Now I must get some sleep. We go out again in the morning. Gough is within a march of us, and I think to-morrow will see the final break-up of our siege ; he ought to be attacked to-night, but people seem to think the enemy have lost heart. They did not attack well to-day, and they suffered heavily ; the villages were full of their dead, and they carried away all they could. Good-night, my own. You won't fret about it if I don't get the Cross ? I shall reproach myself if I have only caused you disappointment in the hope of giving you pleasure. If you want to make me happy, you won't be troubled about that, or about anything on earth ; not even if I were to fall, as many better men have done. I should like to feel that even that would not make your life sad.

Nay, if you read this line, remember not
The hand that writ it ; for I love you so
That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
If thinking on me then should make you woe.

Good-bye, and God bless you. Are you not glad now that I
met you, and that I left the Thirtieth ? Have you not brought
me wonderful good fortune ?—Ever your own,

GUY LANGLEY.

CHAPTER XXXV

HAPPINESS

HELEN spent her Christmas at Syntia. She had come down from Simla in the beginning of November, when Mrs. Aylmer left, and had taken a small house in the cantonment. She could not face Sangu all alone. Mrs. Graham had gone to England, and the place was almost deserted. Syntia was familiar and more or less homelike even now. The Aylmers asked her to go to them, and so did the Hunters; but she would not do either. She preferred living by herself, and they did not press her.

She was at Syntia when the news of the Kabul rising reached India. A few days later, on the 15th of December, it was known that the British force had been checked if not defeated, and that it was now surrounded and besieged by an enemy of ten times its numbers. Men recalled to mind the disasters of the first Afghan war and the recent massacre of the Mission, and awaited in painful anxiety the arrival of further news. For the poor women who had son or lover or husband in Kabul the next ten days were

very terrible. At any moment the veil might be lifted, and who could tell what horrors might be behind it ?

There were no doubt some grounds for hope and even confidence. The tone of the last telegrams had been cheery enough, and the force was a good one. Still it had been surrounded and shut up ; and our people were now fighting for their lives in the snow, two hundred miles from our border.

Helen Langley suffered with the rest. She tried to be steady and brave, and to pray with faith ; but it was very hard.

On Christmas morning she drove over to church at the Civil Station. The recollection of that happy Christmas three years before had come upon her with irresistible force ; and though she knew the contrast would be a painful one she could not help going. There would be a certain bitter sweetness in it ; and perhaps it might do her good.

She had no carriage of her own, and the little *ticca gári* which they brought her was very straight-backed and uncomfortable ; but it was a beautiful bright morning, and she did not find the drive very tiring. When she arrived she told the driver to stop outside the church 'compound,' and waited until every one had gone in. Then she walked into the familiar porch, and went quietly up the stone staircase to the gallery. No one saw her come up, and she sat down at the back unnoticed. There were hardly half a dozen

people round the harmonium ; Hunter was one of them, but she knew none of the others. The whole place was changed already, as is the way in India. The harmonium was being played, very badly, by the wife of the new clergyman. Little Sladen was gone ; Arthur Goldney was gone too, and Oldfield, and the Andersons. When Helen stood up she could see the eastern end of the church, and her father's pew under the pulpit. It hurt her to see it occupied by strangers. The new Commissioner sat at the end, where she used to see her father's wavy brown head which always looked so young. In the seat where Guy used to sit, when he came, there was no one. It was a dull service, and the church looked empty and neglected. The decorations were scanty, and instead of the happy crowd of 1876 there were only thirty or forty people ; and her heart was cold and sad.

When the Te Deum came she forced herself to sing, and Hunter caught her voice at once. He turned round with a smile in his eyes ; and then seeing her white face, drawn by ten days of terrible suspense, he got out of his place, and came in his boyish affectionate way and stood by her side. It gave them both pleasure. They were the only two of the old set left.

When the service was over the rest of the little choir walked out. Hunter stayed and talked to her and tried to cheer her up. After a few minutes she said : 'Now we really must go. Mrs. Hunter will be

wondering where you are. I suppose most of the people are gone by this time.'

They walked down into the porch and found Mrs. Hunter in some indignation at her husband's absence. Every one had driven away except herself and her two guests, a civil officer and his wife, who were staying with the Hunters for Christmas. The grassy compound was empty, except for their carriage and Helen's little 'midge.'

'Oh, it's you!' Mrs. Hunter said to Helen, holding out her hand with her little half-sneering laugh. 'Of course he would let us wait all day to stay with you.'

Helen smiled. 'Dear Mr. Hunter, I have hardly seen him since I came down. It is so nice seeing him again. A merry Christmas to you!'

Mrs. Hunter's eyes were softer than usual. 'I wish your Christmas could be a little merrier. No news yet?'

Helen shook her head in silence.

'I am so sorry for you. But it will all come right. There's the telegraph-man coming now. I wonder whether it is anything.'

Helen looked up and saw out on the dusty drive in the sunlight the familiar red and blue *puggree* of the telegraph-messenger. Her heart throbbed. 'It can't be for me,' she said to herself. 'Of course it is some official telegram for Mr. Hunter. No one knows I am here.' Nevertheless she had a feeling that it had something to do with her.

She was not long in doubt. The messenger came straight up to her, and taking the telegram out of the leather pouch at his belt, presented it to her with a *salaam*. He had carried many a message up to Colonel Treveryan, and knew her well by sight.

Helen looked at the envelope. It was for her: 'Mrs. Langley, Syntia.' The telegraph-clerk who got the message had known where she was, and had sent it after her.

The messenger handed her a bit of pencil. She signed the receipt fastened to the envelope, and tore it off. As she opened the telegram with trembling fingers her mind sent up a hasty prayer. 'O God, let it be good news!' Then she read it. It was from Guy: 'All well. Enemy beaten and dispersing. Telegraph.'

The sudden shock of happiness was almost too much for her, and for an instant she felt faint and giddy. Then she controlled herself and handed the telegram to Mrs. Hunter. 'See what your good wishes have brought me,' she said; and her face was so changed that Mrs. Hunter was fairly startled.

'Oh, I am glad! Montie, look here.'

Hunter read the telegram and uttered a wild cheer. The telegraph-man looked round, and so did the Hunters' guests.

'Montie!' Mrs. Hunter said, 'do remember where you are.'

'I don't care a hang where I am,' he answered

defiantly, shaking Helen's hand with such warmth that it almost hurt her. ' Didn't I say it would be all right ? I can wish you a merry Christmas now, can't I ? I wouldn't have missed this for a thousand pounds.'

Helen was laughing at him with bright happy eyes. What a dear warm heart he had ! After a few words more he helped her into her narrow little seat, and she drove away, with her telegram in her hand, and deep thankfulness in her heart.

Hunter sighed as he got into his carriage. ' Poor girl,' he said, with his handsome face clouding over, ' how different this is from the old times. Do you remember what a nice turn-out they always had, and how bright and jolly she used to look when they came driving up together ? Poor old Treveryan ! What hard luck it was his breaking his neck like that ; and all to make room for that stupid ass——'

' Montie ! '

' Oh, all right, I'm not going to blaspheme. But what a difference it has made. Syntia isn't the same place now ; never will be again.'

When Helen got home she sent her telegram over to Mrs. Aylmer, and asked her to pass it on to Hugh Dale. ' I shall come over a little before dinner,' she added.

Then she sent her answer to Guy : ' Telegram received. Quite well and very happy. A merry Christmas and bright New Year to you all ! '

Helen did not go over to dinner at the Aylmers'. Shortly after lunch Mabs arrived, to thank her for a beautiful doll's house, with several rooms in it and a real kitchen, which Helen had sent her. Poor mite! she was very grateful, and very disappointed. She had found out by means of some transparent questions that Helen would like a copy of George Herbert, in place of one she had lost. Her little purse held a store of silver four-anna bits which she had earned week by week, and treasured up for Christmas-time, and she had set her heart upon giving Helen the book. Mrs. Aylmer had duly written for it to a Calcutta shop ten days before, and had received an answer to the effect that it would be sent by the next post. Mabs had settled in consultation with her mother that she was to write on the fly-leaf: 'For dear Auntie Helen, from her loving Mabs ;' and she had practised the inscription on a piece of note-paper, sitting at the writing-table with the tip of her little tongue between her lips and a face puckered with toil. But the book never arrived, and her labour was wasted. She told Helen about it, and said in a hard contemptuous little voice that it was just like those stupid shops, and that she would never trust them again. Helen understood, and petted and consoled her ; and the child's arms got round her neck, and then there was a sudden breakdown. 'Oh, Auntie! I can't help it,' she sobbed ; 'I did so want to give it you, and I have been thinking of it so long, and they said they were

sending it.' Poor little girl! She was better when she had had her cry out; and Helen told her all about Guy and the fighting in Kabul; and she listened with much attention, and announced that she was going to write to him. 'Only he's a very bad boy, you know. He has never written to me once since he went away, not even when I sent him many happy returns for his birthday. And he promised he would.'

While the child spoke Helen's heart began to sink with a strange new fear. The hour of her trial was coming upon her. She sent Mabs away with a note to her mother, and summoned up all her faltering courage. What helped her more than anything was the thought of Guy's telegram. With that joy in her heart she felt that she could bear any pain and face any danger.

Mrs. Aylmer came to her at once and made her go to bed, and in the evening, an hour later, Beamish came to see her.

Rex had got into Helen's room, and was sitting by her bedside with his head close to her. 'You must send the dog away,' Beamish said.

'Very well, Dr. Beamish.'

'I will take him out,' and before Helen could warn him Beamish incautiously laid his hand on the dog's collar. He was always clumsy. He started back in alarm as Rex wrenched his head loose with a fierce snarl, showing a set of white teeth that would have done credit to a wolf.

‘Oh, Rex !’ Helen said, putting her hand over his head. ‘What a shocking way to behave. Come and confess. I’m very sorry, Dr. Beamish. He won’t let any one touch him when he is with me; but I’ll send him away.’

She could hardly help laughing even then at Beamish’s face of disgust and alarm.

Rex buried his head in the bedclothes and confessed. He said as plainly as silence could say it: ‘I beg your pardon; I didn’t mean to vex you, but he should not have tried to pull me away.’

Helen kissed his big head. ‘Good-bye, my king; you must be good and go away now. Go out, Rex dear, go out.’

The dog lifted his head and looked at her, and then turned away with drooping ears and tail. As he came near the door he stopped and looked round with a low whine and a glance at Beamish. Must he leave her with that man, whom he despised and distrusted? ‘Yes, dear, go out,’ she said, and he went.

A few hours later they placed on the bed beside her a tiny little red-faced creature, whom Mrs. Baker, the nurse, wife of a soldier from the Thirtieth, declared to be the most beautiful boy she had ever seen in all her born days, and so like his father that she would have known him anywhere.

Helen looked at the child and tried in vain to see the likeness. She reflected that strangers did see family likenesses which were not always visible

to the next of kin. ‘Do *you* see it?’ she asked Mrs. Aylmer.

‘My dear, I never see likenesses, but it’s a beautiful baby.’

‘Is it? Do you really think so?’

‘Yes, I do really. Now go to sleep and don’t talk.’

Helen lay in the silent room trying to realise what had come to her, and very happy. It was such peace and rest after all the long sorrow and suspense and pain. The whole of her troubles seemed to have been lifted from her at once. She fell asleep before day-break and slept for some hours. Soon after she woke she asked for Rex. He came gladly in to her, and then stood still, looking in surprise at the strange thing lying on the other side of the bed.

‘That’s my boy, Rex,’ she said; ‘you must love him very much, as much as me.’

Rex walked slowly round the bed, and for the first time Helen felt a slight thrill of fear. ‘Be good, Rex,’ she said anxiously, putting out her hand. She need not have been afraid. Rex stood looking down at the round red face in the bundle, and smelt the new creature doubtfully, then he licked the little crumpled red fist, and came back to Helen’s side. ‘Oh, you darling,’ she said, and in her weakness her eyes filled with tears.

It was a very happy day. Her room was darkened and silent, but the sun was bright outside, and she

could hear the birds twittering, and the soft breeze whispering in the trees. She lay in quiet enjoyment, and grew accustomed to her new treasure. Her only regret was that it had not come a day or two before, so that she could have told Guy in her telegram. Well, she must send him another. What should they call it?—Guy too, or Erroc? Not Guy, she thought; but Guy should decide. She could easily get an answer before baby had to be christened, and perhaps now Guy would be back in time for that himself. How her heart beat at the thought. Perhaps he might be with her in a month, one month more. What a meeting it would be! What almost unbearable happiness, to look in his face again, and hear his voice, and feel his arms round her.

‘Oh, Guy, come back to me soon, come back to me soon!’ she murmured, her sweet eyes eager with entreaty.

And Guy was lying under the drifted snow, dead, with the treacherous Afghan earth on his face.

CHAPTER XXXVI

A SOLDIER'S DEATH

ON the 23rd of December the Afghans had made their effort and had failed. That night, though Gough's little brigade lay out on the open, within a few miles of them, they did not attempt to destroy it, and there was no further attack on the cantonment. The dark hours passed quietly, and in the morning no enemy was visible. For the time the tribesmen were tired of fighting. They had lost heavily, and their stores of food were exhausted, and they wanted to go to their homes.

These people were very much like the old Scotch clans. They had no cohesion and no real head. They could gather for a few days' fighting against the English, but they were not capable of combination or of sustained effort. In a mountainous and sparsely-populated country tribal feuds are fierce, and they are perhaps specially fierce in Afghanistan. The Ban-i-Israil, as the Afghans call themselves, are brave and savage and fickle, like the people from whom they claim descent. The great tribal gathering had fallen

to pieces even more quickly than it had come together. In defeat such a force had no solidity. On the other hand, if the tribal method of warfare has its drawbacks, it has also its advantages. In a country where every village is a fort, and every man a soldier, it is easy for an army to rise out of the earth, and in case of defeat it is equally easy for an army to sink into the earth. There are no long trains of artillery and waggons, no uniforms even, nothing but thousands of hardy fighting-men armed with sword and matchlock, and carrying a few pounds of grain in their waist-cloths. Give them two hours' start and they are gone.

So when our cavalry rode out on the morning of the 24th of December there was no enemy to fight or pursue. Not an armed man was to be seen. The great host which came rushing up out of the darkness the morning before had vanished as completely as if it had been composed of spirits.

What was to prevent it? During the night those who came from a distance streamed away over the mountains by numberless rocky paths, where cavalry could not have followed them even if their course had been known. Those who came from the open valleys about Kabul quietly dispersed to their homes. They put their weapons in a corner, and came and sat in front of their gateways and were peaceful villagers. If the cavalry rode up they smiled and saluted, or scowled and sat silent. They had nothing to fear. The *sowars* could search the fort no doubt, and might

find arms. What then? Every man in Afghanistan possessed arms. The *sowars* might even find dead or wounded men. If they did, it would not matter. They could not harm the dead, and they would not hurt wounded men who did not resist. The village might be fined hereafter. That was the worst that could happen. The attitude of the people was no doubt a remarkable proof of their confidence in the humanity of their English conquerors, but it made the work of the cavalry very hopeless.

'It is confoundedly riling,' Guy said to Bradford, as they sat on their horses in front of a 'friendly' village. 'Look at that big blackguard there with the sneer on his face. Of course he has been out, and he knows we know it, and yet we can do nothing to him. It would be all right, of course, if the thing were all over, but he will shoot us in the back five minutes hence if he gets a chance. It's as bad as dealing with Irishmen. There's something rather funny about it too. I don't mind if they just laugh at you and don't sneer; but a brute like that openly despises you for being such a fool as not to kill him, and hates you all the worse. I feel as if I should not mind obliging him.'

The Sikhs felt the same, only much more strongly. There was no understanding the English,—fighting like born devils one minute, and then letting themselves be fooled and insulted to their faces. 'Sahib, what sort of warfare is this?' old Gulab Singh said sadly

as they rode away. ‘Of course you are wiser than I am, but I can’t make it out. These people hate you, and you have beaten them. It seems to me there is only one way to treat them,—*Máro, máro, maeda karo* (Smite them and grind them to powder) !’

It was a dreary day, cloudy and cold ; and as the cavalry went on hour after hour without seeing the smallest sign of an armed enemy, the silence and solitude and emptiness of the country began to weigh upon their spirits. After all the excitement of the past fortnight it was intensely depressing. One missed the familiar puffs of smoke and the cheerful popping of rifles, and the deeper voice of the guns. Even the song of the bullet above one’s head had come to be pleasant, when there were not too many singing at once. Officers and men had got used to the noise and life and stir. Now there was a reaction, and everything seemed ‘weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable.’ In the afternoon it began to snow hard, and the snow balled in the horses’ feet. This was the last straw. It was useless to go on any longer, so the pursuit was abandoned, and the heads of the weary beasts were turned homewards.

They had arrived within two or three miles of the cantonment, and the detachments which had been scattered over a great extent of country were fast closing in. Guy and his squadron had rejoined the rest of the regiment, and they were now in country which they knew well. As they came into their last piece of

open ground before crossing the pass which led into the Kabul plain, they left behind them on their left a little fort under a stony hill-side nearly a mile away. The light was beginning to fade, and the snow made everything deceptive, but it struck MacPherson that he saw some mounted men on a low *kotul* above the fort.

MacPherson's fibre was a tough and rather a coarse one. He was not greatly depressed by the want of excitement, or worn out with his day's work, or at all inclined to let off any of the enemy because the gathering had broken up and dispersed. His business was to ride down and kill any Afghans he could find with weapons in their hands; and he was just as determined to do so now as when he rode out of the cantonment in the morning. Colonel Graham could not make out any enemy, and did not want to take the weary regiment so far out of their way without very good cause. He rode over to Bradford's squadron, which was out on some stony open ground to the left, and asked whether they could see men on the hill. Neither Bradford nor Guy could be certain, and Graham said, 'Well, I suppose we had better make sure. Will you take a few *sowars*, Langley, and ride over to the fort? I don't think there is anything at all, but if you think there is, don't push on too far.'

'All right, sir, I'll be careful.'

Guy rode off at a trot with Gulab Singh and half

a dozen men, and Graham saw the little party go right on into the gathering dusk. The snow was falling very slightly now, and the dark figures showed plainly on the white ground.

There was no enemy to be seen when the little party reached the fort; but MacPherson had been right in thinking he saw something on the *kotul*. Two or three men driving some pack-mules had just come down by a path from the north. They were now in front of the fort gate, in the snow. The fort itself was white with snow, which lay thickly along the top of the mud walls and towers. Guy spoke to the mule-drivers, and to the villagers who were standing about the gateway, and found every one civil and respectful. The cavalry were very plainly visible on the open ground within five minutes' canter. They remained halted for a few minutes, and then, seeing Guy and his men ride straight up to the fort, Graham continued his march, leaving the detachment to overtake him. From the fort there was a direct road to the pass, and it was not necessary for Guy to ride back across country. By making for the pass he could rejoin the regiment there.

He had been talking for a few seconds with the villagers when a man came up to him and gave him a military salute. Guy asked him whether he had served, and he said yes,—that he had been a *sowar* in one of our cavalry regiments, and had served all through the Mutiny. Some years afterwards the

Amir Sher Ali had offered him a place, and he had retired from our service.

‘ And now I suppose you have been serving against us ? ’ Guy said with a laugh.

‘ No, Sahib. Never ! What could we do against the Sirkar ? ’

‘ Where are the rebels gone to ? ’

‘ All scattered to their homes. They had thousands killed, and they have fled to the hills. They were all wild hillmen from a distance who did not understand.’

Guy knew better, but there was no use in arguing the point. He filled up his pipe, and asked his new friend to bring him a piece of firewood. When he had got the pipe well alight he raised his hand to his helmet with a farewell salute, and turned towards the pass and rode away. The regiment was now a good distance ahead, on his right front, and would reach the pass some time before him unless he trotted on. But the horses were tired, and they kept getting their feet full of balled snow. There was no necessity to rejoin. The country ahead was open and well known to him. On the left of his road lay a bare stony hill-side ; on the right was flat ground and cultivation, with some water-cuts and low mud walls all white with snow ; there were no more villages, and not a living thing in sight. He looked at the bare crest of the pass in front of him and decided to go on quietly. Even his little Kataghani was showing signs of fatigue,

and the *sowars'* horses were worn out. What was the use of pressing on? They were just home now, and the regiment was in front of them. After a time he saw the lances upon the crest of the pass against the dark gray sky, and then they streamed over and disappeared. He and his men were alone in the valley.

They were all weary, and marched carelessly forward in silence. The night was closing in fast; and a little fine snow was falling. It gathered about Guy's shoulders and the folds of his *posteen*, and lay thick upon his bridle arm. His right hand was in his breast, under the warm sheepskin, and his feet were hanging free of the stirrups, which chilled them. Now and then the little horse shook the snow from his head and neck; but his master rode on without taking any notice of it. His thoughts had wandered far away from the wintry valley and all his surroundings. He was dreaming of a beautiful face held up to his own, and a sweet low voice that trembled with happiness. And he gave her his sword again, and said, 'I have done as you told me, darling. I have borne it with honour.'

There was a sudden flash in the darkness to the right, a shot, and a scattering volley. Guy Langley threw up his arms with a cry, and as the startled horse swerved across the road he fell with a dull thud upon the snow.

One of the *sowars'* horses was shot, and fell under its rider. There was a moment of confusion; but the

Sikhs, though careless, were good soldiers, and two or three of them, led by young Atar Singh, dashed towards the low wall from which the shots had come. They were just in time to see four men running across a bit of broken ground towards a deep water-cut, fringed with poplars. The horsemen were very quick after them, being light men on handy horses ; and one of the four Afghans, a big man in a dirty sheepskin coat, fearing he could not get over the water in time, lost his head and ran down to his left under a bit of wall ; the other three crossed the water-cut by a narrow plank, and made off behind the trees. The horsemen saw the position at once and rode to their left, after the man on their side of the trench. They were up to him in a minute, and Atar Singh made a lunge at him with his lance ; but the Afghan avoided it, and swinging up his heavy knife cut the boy across the hand, nearly severing two of his fingers. Before he could turn to run again a second horseman was on him, and with a grim '*Hyun ?* Would you ?' drove the lance through his chest. As he fell off it, dead, the blood gushed from his mouth upon the snow, and his cap and *lungee* rolled away, exposing the huge shaven head. The *sowar* came back to him in an instant, and deliberately drove the lance point two or three times through the hairy uncovered throat into the earth. Then they helped Atar Singh to tie up his wounded hand with a bit of his *puggree*, and went back into the road.

They found Guy lying where he had fallen. A *sowar* was supporting his head, but he had never moved or spoken. The bullet, fired from behind him, had gone in under the left shoulder and passed out through the chest. They staunched the blood as best they could, and one of them galloped on to overtake the regiment, which on the other side of the ridge had heard nothing of the shots. But the Sikhs knew it was useless; no help could save him now.

He was borne sadly back to the cantonment, and laid on the bed in his tent. The Indian mail had come in that day, and several letters from Helen were on the camp table by his side. There was also one from Roland and one from his mother. She had given way at last, and had written in words of passionate love and anxiety.

He was buried next day in the desolate cemetery at the western end of the cantonment, among the lopped stems of the willow trees. As the little party of his countrymen in their worn fighting-clothes stood by the open grave, the sun was shining and the sky was blue, and the great circle of mountains around them glittered in a dazzling garment of new-fallen snow. There they left him lying, his bright face very calm and peaceful, and his brave young heart for ever still. God rest our English dead !

CHAPTER XXXVII

SORROW

THE news of Guy's death was telegraphed to India, and Colonel Graham, who knew where Helen was, sent a private message to Colonel Aylmer. He described how Guy had been killed, and begged Aylmer to assure Helen of the deep sympathy of himself and his brother officers. 'Poor girl!' he said, 'I am afraid there is no breaking these things; but she must not learn it through the newspapers. I know Mrs. Aylmer is a great friend of hers.' Colonel Graham followed up his telegram by a letter speaking very warmly of Guy's character and services, and mentioning that he had intended to send in his name for the Victoria Cross on account of his conduct on the 23rd of December.

That Christmas night was not a merry one in Kabul. More than a twentieth part of our force had been killed or wounded during the past few days, and the hospitals were full of sick men; those who were not sick were tired with want and watching. Guy's name was brought up at more than one rough mess-

table, and they were all sorry for him. ‘Poor chap!’ they said, ‘it was hard luck getting bowled over like that just at the end, when everything seemed to be quiet. He was a good fellow too, and a gentleman, and had behaved awfully well when the regiment got slated on the 23rd. Just like those cowardly hogs, to go and shoot him from behind in the dark.’ In his own regiment officers and men talked of him very often for some days. Lawrence missed him badly, and old Gulab Singh fairly cried over it; and then his property was sold by auction, with the exception of his sword and a few other things which were sent down to Helen. After that he was soon forgotten, as dead men must be who make no material gap in other men’s lives. The living have no time to think of people who cannot do them any good, and do not write letters. How many of your friends do you suppose, even of your nearest and dearest, will ever go five miles out of their way to see your grave? How many dead men have you done it for? That has nothing to do with it; you have not forgotten them, but you can do them no good by going to their graves. If you say that, you have never loved.

When Guy had been dead a fortnight one man came and took a sketch of the place. Russell’s big heart had been touched. Among the knot of bronzed and bearded English who gathered about the grave when the service was being read, his massive brow and dark, stern face were conspicuous. He stood bare-

headed in the sun, towering above the men alongside him. When the service was over he walked away by himself. 'It does seem hard,' he thought; 'only twenty-seven. He was always plucky and bright, and he behaved really well the other day on the Siah Sung. He might have made a fine soldier. Well, he has died for the old country anyhow.' Then he wondered whether Helen was in India. 'Poor girl!' he said, 'it will be hard for her.'

When Colonel Graham's telegram reached Syntia it brought sadness to more than the one it chiefly concerned. The Thirtieth deplored Guy's death with real feeling, and Hugh Dale's loyal heart was very sore. The Aylmers were in painful distress and perplexity. The news coming now must be a terrible shock to Helen, and yet it seemed impossible to keep it from her long.

They did keep it from her for some days, and then Mrs. Aylmer made up her mind that she must delay no longer. Helen was gaining strength rapidly, and it was not right to leave her in ignorance. Besides, the nurse was very difficult to manage; it was impossible to make her behave as if nothing had happened, and there was no knowing what she might say or do.

Mrs. Aylmer was a brave woman, but for once she fairly recoiled from the task she had set herself. As she came to the door of Helen's room that morning and laid her hand on the curtain, she heard Helen's

voice talking to the child. She stopped and listened. 'Only one month more, perhaps. Think of that, baby; only thirty days. But you won't know him when he does come, you unnatural little wretch; I shall have to introduce you, and I suppose you will both be very stiff and hardly speak to one another. Probably you won't speak at all,—won't even bow to him,' and she laughed a happy little laugh at her own nonsense. Then she sighed, and was silent. Mrs. Aylmer knew well enough what her thoughts were. 'Will it really be only a month? If only I knew something for certain. Oh, when will he come to me?' Was she to step in now and say: 'Never, Helen; you will never see his face again. He is dead, and they have buried him far away in the Afghan snow'? She turned away from the door and stood irresolute. 'I *cannot* tell her,' she thought; 'it is too dreadful.' Her hesitation did not last long; she nerved herself with a desperate effort, and walked into the room. Helen looked round and smiled, and Mrs. Aylmer came to her bedside and kissed her and sat down.

'How solemn you look.'

'Do I, dear? I have had bad news to-day.'

'Have you? I am so sorry.' Then Mrs. Aylmer's silence and something in her manner struck a chill to Helen's heart. She looked up with frightened eyes. Mrs. Aylmer did not meet them.

'Helen, dear?'

'Yes.'

‘ You could be brave and strong, I know, if sorrow came to you too ? ’

Then she knew. There was nothing else that could bring her sorrow. She had no one but Guy. ‘ Oh, what is it ? ’ she cried. ‘ He is not dead ? say he is not dead ! ’

Mrs. Aylmer was silent. She held Helen’s hand tight, but she could say nothing.

‘ Oh, tell me, tell me ! He is wounded or ill ; not dead, not dead ? ’

‘ God comfort you, dear ! ’

Helen sank back with a moan. After a second or two she spoke again ; her eyes were wild, and her face was flushing. ‘ Tell me everything. When did you hear ? ’

Mrs. Aylmer told her of the telegram.

‘ Can I see it ? ’

‘ Yes, if you like, darling ; but I have told you exactly what was said.’

‘ Let me see it, please.’

Mrs. Aylmer had guessed she would ask for it, and had brought it with her.

Helen read it slowly twice over, and Mrs. Aylmer saw her look at the date. Then she turned away with a low sigh, and covered her face with her hands and lay quite still. Mrs. Aylmer sat by her, hoping that she might speak, or that the tears would come to help her, but she lay breathing quietly as if asleep. All that day it was the same. Mrs. Aylmer

tried to rouse her by speaking of the child, but it was useless ; she seemed quite indifferent to it, and to everything, doing whatever they told her to do, and answering quietly when they spoke to her, but never speaking of her own accord, or showing any outward sign of grief. Only once she said to Mrs. Aylmer : 'Would you mind sending that telegram for me in the same words to Roland ? He is at home now, I suppose,—Wrentham Hall, Warwick.'

In the night she slept a little, and when Mrs. Aylmer came to her next day she said : 'They will write, won't they ?—Colonel Graham or some of them ?'

'Yes, they are sure to do that.'

'I suppose we shall get the letter in three or four days now ?'

'Yes, I hope so.'

'Perhaps he wrote too when he telegraphed.'

'Very likely, dear ; but he may not have had time to write.'

Helen said no more, but lay waiting. Whenever any one came into the room she looked up with an anxious inquiry in her face. Her eyes were big and hollow now, and she was very white ; the veins about her temples showed clearly.

It came at last, Guy's happy letter of the 23rd of December ; and Mrs. Aylmer, knowing the writing, brought it to her and left her alone.

It was a voice from the grave. Helen read it with dry, eager eyes, until she reached Guy's description of

the fight on the Siah Sung. The thought of him riding back alone to save his friend brought a sob to her throat, and in a moment more, as she read on to the prophetic ending, her sobs came thick and fast, and she burst into a passionate storm of tears. She could hardly see to read the closing words, with their cruel, unintentional satire: 'My darling, my own brave darling!' she wailed, 'I have killed you! I have killed you!'

Half an hour later Mrs. Aylmer went in to her and found her quiet and exhausted with grief; her hand was under her pillow holding her letter. After that, with all her self-reproach, she could speak about Guy, and could pity the child.

The letters from Colonel Graham and the other officers were all very full of sympathy, and, what was more to her, full of heartfelt praise. There were some touching letters also from one or two of Guy's native friends in the regiment. Men who will fight for you to the death can grieve for you honestly, in spite of your white skin. Finally, there came from Kabul a case containing all that had been kept back from the sale of Guy's effects. There was his sword, and the plain gold signet ring Helen had given him, which he always wore; and a little Bible, her gift too, which he had often kissed and very rarely read; and a number of her letters, the last still unopened; and the packet with his mother's hair; and a few other things.

By that time Helen was out of her room again.

She was white and changed, but quite composed and steady.

Meanwhile, she had received from Roland an answer to her telegram. He assured her of his deep sympathy, and added that he was writing. When his letter arrived it was very tender and loving. He asked whether she was coming to England, and begged her if so to write to him and let him do all he could for her. He gave Helen an affectionate message from his father. His mother was very much upset by the news, and Roland had not seen her. For himself, he was about to settle in London ; he was going to do some work in the East-end. He could not offer her a home, for he had none ; but perhaps if she were staying in London they would meet, and it would be a great pleasure to him to know her, and if possible to do a little to help her.

Helen talked it over with the Aylmers. She was reluctant to leave India, where she really had more friends than in England, but she could not remain in India indefinitely without any object in life, and for the child's sake it was better to go. Mrs. Aylmer felt it was better for Helen's sake too ; a complete change of scene and a return to an English climate were very necessary for her health. Dr. Beamish thoroughly agreed. Helen's business affairs were in good order. Guy's will had been made after his marriage, and left everything to her ; and she had a little money in hand. Colonel Aylmer could settle everything that

remained. Eventually it was arranged that she should start in March, before the hot weather set in. She was anxious to go to Sangu and break up the house herself; but this Beamish positively forbade, and Helen gave in with a sigh.

The Sangu boxes duly arrived, and Helen had some bitter weary days of sorting and packing. It was hard to give up anything that had ever belonged to Guy, and she had so much. It was done at last. His books and his little personal treasures she kept, but a number of things had to go. All his clothing she set apart for the chaplain of the station; it would do some good, and the thought helped her, though she shed many tears as she lingered over the familiar things she had so often seen him wear. He was always so careful about what he wore. She remembered how worried he had been by a little wrinkle on the shoulder of the last coat sent to him from England, and how she had laughed at him, and tried to smooth it away, and kissed it, but he would not be comforted. She kissed it again now and put it away. These things are follies, no doubt. With increasing years one learns that it is wiser to avoid all such feelings; youth loves to burden itself with unnecessary loads. It is better to be sensible and practical. Burn your letters and your memories if you can. Bear only the sorrows that are laid upon you. Get hard; it is happier so,—perhaps.

If Helen was young in her feelings she was not

young in her outward behaviour. She had seen all her old friends now ; they came and sat with her, and she talked to them quietly, and asked about all that was going on. It was not her way to wear her heart upon her sleeve.

Poor Mrs. Beamish was shocked by it. She had come in with a very long face and eyes of tearful sympathy, and she could not understand being met as she was. Helen gently put aside all condolences, and asked her cheerfully about her own affairs and the doings of little Georgie. She had come prepared for a good howl, and Helen's manner chilled and repressed her ; she went away unsatisfied and critical. However, Beamish turned upon her savagely when she said something about it, and being a humble good-natured woman she soon felt she had been wrong. She was reduced to tears of penitence next day when she received from Helen a little note asking whether it would be any help to her if Helen took the boy to England. 'I did not know until you told me,' Helen wrote, 'that you were thinking of sending him home this year. If it would be any comfort to you, let me take him. We have always been great friends, and I will take every care of him.'

It really was good of her. At first she shrank from making the offer ; the charge of a troublesome, neglected boy is not a pleasant thing on board ship, and she had enough on her hands already. But Beamish had been very good to her in his rough way,

both now and when her father died, and she forced herself to undertake the duty. The Aylmers protested vigorously when they heard what she had done; but the letter had gone, and she was the happier for having sent it.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

GOOD-BYE TO SYNTIA

THE afternoon before Helen was to leave Syntia she drove over to the Civil Station. She wished to see her father's grave, and to have a few minutes alone in the place where she had been so happy. It was getting rather hot now in the day-time, and the dust wind had begun to blow, but she was hardly conscious of it.

The little cemetery was not more neglected-looking than other Indian cemeteries; but even in her new grief it made her heart ache to leave her father there, among the tall mouldering monuments and the coarse rank Indian grass. She laid a bunch of his favourite violets upon the plain block of marble which covered his grave, and knelt for a few minutes by the side of it, thinking, not praying. What had she to pray for now? Then she pressed her lips to the cold stone. 'Good-bye, daddy,' she said, and stood up and went slowly away.

At the church she stopped again. She walked up into the gallery and stood where she had stood when

Guy first kissed her. She turned towards the narrow doorway, and tried to conjure up his figure, and the sound of his foot on the stones of the winding stair. How well she remembered the look on his face as she had seen it then,—bright and eager with love and expectation. She looked down at her father's seat, and at the place where she used to see Guy when she first knew him, only three years ago, at the end of a short pew near one of the pillars of the aisle. She could see him now, with his head leaning against the pillar, as he used often to sit during the sermon. And she could see the spot where they had knelt side by side in the marriage-service. Good-bye for ever! Good-bye, good-bye!

She came out of the church, and went on with her pilgrimage of sweet self-torture. Her father's house she knew was empty. The new Commissioner was a man of economical tastes, and he had taken a smaller house, where the Oldfields used to live. As she drove up to the door she noticed that the patches of flower-garden in front of the steps were neglected. The ground was hard and cracked, and the rose bushes untrimmed. Apparently there was no one in attendance, so she walked up the steps and entered the house. In the hall, where her birds used to be, and the books and the big divan, there was nothing but a string bed, with a dirty sheet upon it, belonging to the caretaker. All the rooms were empty and stripped, the mats rolled up, the plaster floors covered with dust, the walls unswept.

She walked into her own bedroom, which in its emptiness looked huge and ghostly. One of the windows had been burst open by the hot wind, which was moaning through the house. She went and stood by the window and looked out, as she had done the day that Guy's letter was brought to her. That was where the man came up through the mango trees, just three years ago.

Rex whined and pressed his head into her hand. He had been looking about him unable to understand it all.

She went back into the drawing-room, where she had first seen Guy on the day that he called. It too looked huge and ghostly. Then she went through the dining-room into the south verandah. There at least was the old scene,—the level sward in front, and the great banyan tree by the road, with the line of mangoes and palms beyond it in the distance, and the tall slender cork tree on the grass to the right. That was where Guy said the first word of love to her that Sunday morning. It seemed like yesterday. Good-bye, good-bye for ever!

There was one more place that she felt she must see. She drove to the railway station. It was quite empty, and there was nothing to be heard but the low moan of the dust wind. In the telegraph-office there was one half-caste clerk receiving a message, and everything was so still that she heard him click his acknowledgement of a word as she passed the open door. Helen

walked along the echoing platform until she stood on the spot where she had been standing when Guy arrived from England. Outside in the sunlight the wind was stirring the leaves of the creeper upon the wall, where the name 'Syntia' was painted up. Some sparrows were pecking about on the flags. She looked at the straight double line of rails, narrowing into the distance among the palms, just as she had looked at them that day when she stood unwittingly waiting for the train which brought Guy to her. Ah! if that day could come again. It seemed so short a time ago, so near her still. She could almost grasp it. For a moment she tried desperately to do so; to make her dream a living reality, as if by a supreme effort of will and prayer she might annihilate all that had passed since then. Alas! there are things too strong for will and prayer.

She turned away and walked back towards the entrance. It was all over now.

As she reached the doorway the station-master came out of his room and walked up to her. She had hoped that afternoon to avoid meeting any one she knew, but now, after passing through the places where she had been so happy, and not seeing one familiar face, she realised with a sense of surprise that she was glad to see even this man. She had never known much of him, but he had been in Syntia some years, and had always been civil and obliging. He was a Bengalee of the old school, rather odd in some of his ways, but

to those who understood him thoroughly loyal and trustworthy. He would have jobbed into Government employ, if he had been able to do so, every one of his relatives, and every one of his wife's relatives, however unfit, and he would afterwards have screened them from punishment whatever fault they might have committed. That he regarded as his duty to his kith and kin. But, though a poor man, his personal honesty was proof against any bribe; he would work day and night without a murmur, and his accuracy was remarkable. So long as he was not surprised or frightened he was a very valuable servant.

The Bábu wore white clothes and a velvet cap with 'Station-Master' embroidered upon it.

The old gentleman stood before Helen with a bow, or rather with a sudden doubling up at the waist, as if he had been seized with a momentary cramp. She remembered with a pang that she had once seen Guy imitate this very action.

'Good afternoon, Bábu,' Helen said; 'I hope you are well.'

'By your favour, madam. Thank you.'

'I am very glad. Good-bye, Bábu. I am going away to-morrow,' and she held out her hand, which he took respectfully.

She was passing on when he spoke again. 'We of the native community have all been extremely sorry for your honour. Your honoured father, our late Commissioner Sahib, he was always very kind upon us;

and Captain Langley too, though he was very young gentleman, he was also very kind. It was great pity that he should be murdered and killed ; but it is the will of God. What can we do ? If it pleases Almighty God to afflict His fellow-creatures, we poor mortals can do nothing. It is impossible.'

Helen winced under the good old man's sympathy, but she thanked him and wished him good-bye ; and then, as he stood on the steps and suddenly doubled up again, she leant back and burst into a flood of hysterical tears and laughter.

Rex whined uneasily and pushed his head into her lap. After a time his distress forced itself upon her attention. She stroked his head gently, and her sobs grew quieter. 'It is all over,' she thought. 'I shall never see the dear old place again—never, never, never !'

That night she was less miserable. The bitterness of parting was over.

The Bombay mail train did not leave Syntia till five o'clock the next evening, and Helen had written to Hugh Dale, asking him to come and see her after breakfast. He had seen her several times since Guy's death, and his boyish sympathy had been very touching. When he came up this last morning Helen said to him : 'I wanted to see you before I went, to thank you for all your kindness, and to say good-bye. You will come and see me and your godson whenever you come home ?'

‘You may be very sure of that, Mrs. Langley. You know I,—cared for Guy more than any one in the world ; and I think it was awfully good of you to ask me to be godfather to your boy. I shall never forget it.’

‘You were his greatest friend. I know he would have asked you.’

They spoke a little about her voyage, and Chimp said : ‘I *am* so sorry for you, going on that long voyage all alone.’

‘Oh, it won’t be very bad. I am a good sailor, and know how to look after myself.’

‘Must you take that horrid little wretch with you ?’

‘Georgie Beamish ? Poor little fellow ! he would have had to go all alone. I don’t look forward to it in some ways, but he is generally good with me, and it would have been unkind not to take him. He would have been so miserable by himself.’

‘I hate your doing it. Would you give it up if any one else were to offer to take him ?’

‘It’s too late now. Besides, no one is likely to offer.’

‘I expect some one would turn up.’

‘Do you ? Who is there going home ?’

‘Well, I daresay you’ll laugh, but I am thinking of going myself soon on three months’ leave, and I’ll take the little beggar if you will let me.’

Helen did laugh, though she felt almost as much inclined to cry. She knew Chimp would have done

the thing loyally, and probably done it very well, but the child would have thought he was being handed over to the Evil One. 'No, no,' she said at last; 'I know you mean it, and it is very, very good of you, but I have promised Mrs. Beamish, and I must do it. It won't be any great trouble really. I'm taking as my servant the *ayah* who has always been with him, and they are fond of one another.'

'Well, I won't say any more. But I mean it really.'

'I know you do, Mr. Dale, and I am very grateful; but you must let me take him.'

Then she told Chimp that she wanted him to do her a favour, to accept Sultan from her and keep him. Chimp had meant to buy the horse after she left, but he could not refuse.

'It will be such a pleasure to me,' she said, 'to know you have him; but will you promise me one thing? If you have no further use for him you will not sell him? Find a really kind master for him, or shoot him, but don't sell him to any one. And you will be very gentle with him, won't you?'

Chimp promised, and the horse was sent for. Helen went out to the porch when Chimp left, and Sultan was standing ready. 'I want him to go with you now,' she said. 'Let me feel he is safe under your care before I leave.'

Rex had gone down to greet his old playfellow, who made a snap at him. Sultan always pretended to have

an objection to dogs, as became an Arab. When he heard Helen's voice he whinnied. She went down and gave him a piece of sugar, and patted his smooth skin for the last time ; and he rubbed his tan muzzle against her shoulder. 'Good-bye !' she said, with her head against his cheek. 'Thank you for many, many happy days. I shall never have such happy days again. Good-bye, dear,' and she kissed him and went back into the house.

In the evening the Aylmers and Dale saw her off from the railway station, and as the train moved she saw at the end of the platform several of Guy's old brother officers and Mrs. Dangerfield.

She had still to pass the Civil Station and to meet her charge ; for a few minutes she felt anxious lest she might not find him. It would be just like Mrs. Beamish to be late, and then Helen would be left not only without the boy, but without a servant. They could not catch her up before the steamer went off. However, when the train drew up there was Mrs. Beamish, poor woman, with the tears pouring down her face, and the Limb as dirty and untidy as ever, and the *ayah*, and Dr. Beamish himself, and the Hunters. The Limb's only luggage was an oval tin bath with a lid to it. The lock was broken, and the bath was tied round with cord.

Helen said good-bye to the Hunters, and the poor Beamishes said good-bye to their boy, and the train moved off.

The boy cheered up very quickly. Helen had taken the precaution of bringing with her a book of pictures belonging to Mabs, and a box of chocolate; and she gave him a piece, which consoled him immediately. Then she sat down and looked out of the window. She wanted to see the racecourse as they went past. It very nearly upset her again. Everything was so exactly as it used to be when her father and she used to ride round in the evening,—so still and quiet, with the palms in the centre, and their long shadows across the dry short grass. She remembered, as Guy had done, how his horse had plunged at the corner, and how Sultan had bounded off and galloped. It was gone,—the last bit of the dear place—gone for ever; and as she looked out upon the flying country the tears came to her eyes again, and one or two fell.

She was brought to herself by feeling a small hand laid upon her knee, and looked round to find the boy gazing at her with a troubled expression in his face. 'I say,—don't cry.'

'No; it's very silly of me, isn't it? Shall I tell you about the pictures?

The boy looked doubtful. 'I say, look here. I want to show you something. You are awfully fond of pets, aren't you?'

'Yes, dear.'

'Well, look here. Father said I wasn't to take it, but I knew you wouldn't mind, so I just brought it

in my handkerchief; but I had to leave its cage behind.' As he spoke, the boy produced from his trouser-pocket a handkerchief that was almost black with dirt, and unwrapped it carefully. In the centre was a small white rat with a pink nose, which smelt unpleasant.

'Oh, Georgie ! you oughtn't to have brought it if your father told you not to.'

'Oh ! he didn't mind really. It was only because he thought you would not like it. But you do, don't you ? It's awfully pretty, isn't it ? And it is quite tame,—runs all round my neck, and feeds out of my hand.'

Rex, who had been brought into the long Indian carriage, was looking on in contemptuous disgust, and Helen found it difficult to be enthusiastic. However, the only way was to make the best of it. 'Poor little thing,' she said ; 'it looks very frightened. Where did you get it ?'

'The bearer gave it me. There were a lot of them, and he gave me three, but the others died. What a pity, wasn't it ?'

'Yes, dear, a dreadful pity. Never mind, we've got one left. Where are you going to keep it ? It can't live in your pocket.'

'Oh yes. I often keep it there for ever so long.'

'I don't think that is a very nice place for it, Georgie. Look here, suppose we make it a house. I think I know what will do.'

She went to the hamper and produced a biscuit-tin. 'There,—we can wrap up the biscuits in paper, and give him the tin.'

Georgie was deeply interested, and they spent a satisfactory half-hour in fitting up 'Moti's' new home. There were holes in the lid to give him air, and some cotton wool for his bed, and some bread and milk in a saucer. It was quite a success. After that it was time to give Georgie some supper, and then he was put to bed in one of the top bunks; and altogether Helen found that the child had made her first evening less dreary than it would have been; and he really was as good as possible.

CHAPTER XXXIX

GOING 'HOME'

IT was not so bad a voyage as Helen had expected. The railway journey was not very hot, and they got to Bombay without serious trouble. The baby slept almost all the way, and the Limb was quite a model child. He ate voraciously, finding the food at the refreshment-rooms most delicious ; and he occasionally tried to lose himself in the crowd on the platform, but Helen was on the look-out, and kept him from straying far.

He took to washing himself with ardour. He had not been more than locally dirty at any time. India is the cleanest country in the world, and its cleanliness is gradually extending to the whole of the English race, which washes itself more than any other race, but does not wash itself as much as it ought to do.¹ Bathing is so pleasant in India that, as a rule, even boys are substantially clean. But now Helen had

¹ Besides the morning tub, England owes to India another blessed institution, the morning tea. Some day it may be hoped that she will take from India a greater blessing than either,—cremation.

explained to the Limb the advantages of having decent hands, and had presented him with a tooth-brush, which she found he did not possess, and a little of her tooth-powder, and the Limb seized upon the idea as a charming novelty. In fact, it became rather a nuisance. He wanted to brush his teeth a dozen times a day, and then he came and stood in front of her, and grinned like a dog, and demanded examination and praise. He also borrowed her nail-scissors to scrape his nails. Finally his rage for purity led him to put his white rat in the only basin in the bathroom, and to soap it thoroughly with a piece of Helen's best soap. He was absent a long time, and came back in triumph, having dried the shivering creature in her towel. However, he was very good, and gave little or no trouble.

It was the same on board ship. One unlucky morning, while the grown-up people were at lunch, some fiend tempted him, and he was caught by the quartermaster in the act of feeding the ducks with chess pawns from a board that some one had left standing; but this was his last offence. For the rest of the voyage he led a blameless life. In a tank forward were two tiny crocodiles, going home to some Zoological Gardens; and there was Rex, poor Rex, bearing his imprisonment with the calm, heartbroken dignity of a Bonivard; and there were a cow and a goat. The boy was always among these creatures, and after Helen had explained it to him, he began to

understand that the pleasure to be got out of animals was really much greater if he did not tease them. It was a revelation to him, and it was not the only one which came to him during that month. Before the ship was in English waters, the Limb was smartened up and softened and humanised to an extent that would have amazed his mother.

Helen's unselfishness brought its own reward. She had always had a kindly feeling for the boy, and now his affection and obedience were a real pleasure to her. Moreover, he and the baby between them gave her plenty to do, and she had all the less time to brood over her sorrows.

The Limb's *ayah* left them at Suez. She had fever on board ship, and could not stand it any longer. She went away crying bitterly, and Helen was sorry for her. 'All humbug,' one of the ladies said, a lady who had been a year in the country with a British regiment; but it was not all humbug, as any old Indian would have told her. Make any woman's life a burden to her for six or seven years, and she will grieve sincerely when the time for parting comes, even if she be a low-caste Indian *ayah*. Helen luckily was able to engage in her place an English stewardess, Mrs. Barr, who was going home on leave.

They steamed slowly through the canal, and saw the mirage on the desert; and the Limb was wild to get out, and so was poor Rex, as mile after mile of land, or sand, passed under their eyes. Then there

was a gray sky, and a feather-white sea, the blue Mediterranean.

With all her occupations Helen had many miserable times, particularly at night. Hour after hour, when the boys were asleep, she used to lie in her narrow bunk listening to the eternal throb of the engines, the wash of water under her port, the creaking of the timbers, and then her thoughts were very dreary. What in truth was before her ? Of her father's people none remained, but some cousins whom she had not seen since she was a child, and had not much liked then. She could not go back to her old Cornish home. Laneithin was gone, and she could not live alone and poor in that wild country of scattered farm-houses. The Treveryans had had some good friends about St. Erroc, but they would almost have forgotten the girl of fifteen who left the place ten years before. Some of her father's Indian friends were now in England. She could be sure of a cordial welcome from them if she met them ; but they were scattered, and she had never known them very well. Her own life with her father had only lasted two or three years. Her mother's people were strangers. The one person who might be really kind to her was Roland, whom she had never even seen.

It was a melancholy prospect, and at times her fortitude gave way. For the sake of her child, Guy's child, she tried hard to bear up ; but even the thought of the child seemed in a way to add to her grief. If

she died she did not know what would become of him, and if she lived she would find it difficult to give him a happy childhood or a proper education. As she came nearer to England, her thoughts began to fasten more and more upon Roland. Perhaps in him she and the boy might find a real friend. Oh, if she were only sure of one, just one true heart to turn to for sympathy and advice ! Her fellow-passengers had been very kind, but she knew none of them well, and she had shrunk from any confidences. There were several now ready and anxious to help her with her baggage, and to do her any little service in their power ; but when they left the docks their acquaintance would be at an end. Then she would be alone.

It was a dark wet day towards the end of April when the steamer drew alongside the jetty at the London Docks. All the way across the Bay of Biscay and up the Channel the sea had been as smooth as a pond. They had passed the Isle of Wight in soft gray rain. It had rained ever since, and though it was not actually raining now, everything looked wet and cheerless. The deck was covered with boxes, and the confusion and bustle made it all worse.

' I suppose some one will be coming to meet you, ma'am ? ' Mrs. Barr said to her.

' No, I don't think so,' Helen answered. She had written to Roland, and told him she was coming in the *Venice*, but she had not asked him to meet her, and he was not likely to find out about the ship's

arrival and do so unasked. Possibly Mrs. Beamish's sister, who was to have charge of Georgie, might come to meet him; but this also was doubtful. She lived in Hammersmith, and Helen was to send Georgie to her. Mrs. Barr tried another question. 'Will you be going straight home, ma'am, or to a hotel?'

'A hotel, I think,' Helen answered wearily. The Aylmers had advised her to go to the Langham, where they generally went. She might as well go there as anywhere else. It was all the same to her. When she had seen Roland she would make some plans. 'I wonder whether he will come,' she thought; and she looked at the little crowd on the jetty. The steamer was being warped alongside now, and she could see their faces.

Yes; there he was. She knew him at once. He was very like Guy; slighter and not so tall, but very like, in spite of his clerical dress. The likeness troubled her, but she was glad to see him. She would not be quite alone now. It would have been so miserable to find herself in this great busy city without one single friend.

'I think that gentleman has come to meet me,' she said; 'the clergyman there. If he comes on board and asks for me would you kindly help him? I will stay here.'

'To be sure, ma'am,' the woman said heartily, and she went off.

In a few minutes more Roland came on board.

Helen was sitting on deck, at a distance from the crowded gangway ; but Mrs. Barr pointed her out to him, and he came straight towards her. She stood up, and he saw before him a tall, graceful figure in deep black, with the sweetest face his eyes had ever beheld. 'Helen ?' he said, holding out both his hands.

'Yes, Roland. How very good of you to come.'

He bent down and kissed her, and his face flushed a little. 'You didn't suppose for a moment I should do anything else ?' he said, and his voice thrilled through her. It was Guy's voice ; not his face, but his voice. She could hardly bear it.

'There was another man there,' he went on, 'who came to meet you,—a nice-looking man ; in the army, I should think, but he has gone off. I got talking to him before the steamer came alongside, and when I said you were my sister, and I was going to look after you, he said, "Oh, then I won't stay. It would only bother her." He said his sister, Mrs. Aylmer, had asked him to come and help you.'

'Dear Mrs. Aylmer !' Helen said ; 'it was just like her. I wish he had stopped. I should have liked to thank him.'

'Hullo ! here is some one else.'

It was a tall woman, like Mrs. Beamish, but not chastened by India, more vulgar-looking, very badly and rather loudly dressed. With her was a boy, older and stronger than Georgie, but almost unmistakably Georgie's brother.

‘Have I the pleasure of speaking to Mrs. Langley?’ No mistake there; Mrs. Beamish’s brogue exactly.

‘I am Mrs. Langley,’ Helen said. ‘I am afraid you have come to take Georgie away from me. You are Mrs. O’Brien?’

‘I am. And is this Georgie? Ah now, how white he’s looking!’

‘Do you think so? I thought him looking so much better than when he left Syntia.’

‘They have all come to me looking like that, but they soon get some colour into their cheeks. He’s got a decent hat anyhow, instead of the dirty old pith things the others all came in.’ Helen had bought him a hat in Bombay to replace his battered *solah topee*, but she did not say so.

The brothers stood looking at one another in silence. They were complete strangers.

Mrs. O’Brien thanked Helen cordially for her kindness in taking care of the child, and Helen thought she seemed good-hearted; but poor Georgie was very loth to go with her. It was a desperate wrench when he had to part from Helen. She promised to come and see him, and he went at last, struggling to be brave. ‘You will come,’ he said; ‘really and truly?’

‘Yes; really and truly.’

‘When? To-morrow?’

‘I don’t know, dear. Some day soon.’

‘Are you quite sure you would not like Moti?’ He

had offered her his dearest treasure that morning, and had been infinitely relieved when she refused it.

'Quite sure. It was very dear of you to think of it, but I would rather you had it, really.'

She kissed him, and he clung to her for a second, and then went away. His brother was watching him. Helen looked at him with pity in her eyes. 'Poor little fellow!' she said, 'I'm afraid he'll have a hard time at first.'

She would have pitied him very deeply if she could have seen him a little longer. His courage broke down for a moment when he was in the train with his brother and aunt, and his face quivered.

Dennis looked at him with contempt. 'What are you blubbing about?'

'I'm not blubbing.'

'Oh, what a whopper! I saw you. Why, you're blubbing now.'

'I tell you I'm not;' and the aunt very nearly had to stop a fight, which she did by threatening to 'smack' them both if they were not quiet.

The evening was a stormy one for Georgie. His brothers evidently did not think much of him. They mimicked his Indian accent, which they had lost only a few years earlier, and teased Moti; and altogether he felt very desolate. There was no doubt whatever that he was 'blubbing' when he had got into his strange new bed, and the light was gone, blubbing with the sheet stuffed into his mouth, and his blanket over

his head, so that Dennis should not hear him ; and wishing he were dead. Poor little waif ! But he was luckier than many in having a home and some brothers to come to ; and his desolation did not last long.

When Mrs. O'Brien had taken Georgie away, Roland asked Helen who the boy was, and went on to ask about her voyage, and finally tried to admire the baby. Then they landed and cleared her luggage, and Roland took her off to the rooms he had got for her. There was a nice motherly old landlady, and bright fires were burning in the rooms, and everything looked clean and warm and cheerful. Roland stayed and had some tea with Helen, and when he went her heart was full of comfort. She tried to thank him, but he said 'Nonsense. I am only too delighted to do anything I can for you. If brothers and sisters don't help one another a little, who should ?' How good he was, and what a difference it had made to her. She felt stronger and better than she had ever felt since her sorrow came upon her. After all she was not alone in England. She had one real friend, and he was Guy's brother.

As he was walking out of the room, Ro put a letter on the table. 'This is from my mother,' he said. 'I will come and talk to you about it to-morrow.' It was like him not to pretend he had forgotten it till then. There was no 'Oh, by the way.'

Roland and his father had induced Lady Mary to write the letter. She was not altogether sorry to do so, for she was curious to see the woman who had won

Guy's heart, and she longed to see his child. But she could not write warmly. Her feeling for Helen was still one of strong dislike, and her pride was high. Roland suspected when she gave him the letter that she had not written very cordially, and he said as he took it that he hoped it was a kind one. The speech was not happy, and Lady Mary was vexed. Roland was right, however, and felt it, and he would not stay to see Helen read the letter. It was better she should read it alone.

That night she sat over her fire for some time thinking it out. The letter was cold, no doubt, but it called her Helen, and asked her to go to Wrentham 'for a few days.' She decided that she would go. It would be a satisfaction to see Guy's people, and the places he had so often spoken of; and perhaps Lady Mary was only shy, and all would be well. At all events she would go. While she was thinking, Roland was writing a letter to his mother,—a long letter, in which he spoke of Helen in terms of almost rapturous praise. Lady Mary read it next day with a curl of her lip. Roland was intensely foolish at times.

Helen slept quietly that night. She was much less desolate than she had expected to be, and there was a sense of rest and peace in getting settled, even in a London lodging.

CHAPTER XL

WRENTHAM

ROLAND came in the morning, and found Helen rested and apparently cheerful. She was young, and healthy in body and mind, and she was determined to bear her sorrow bravely. The feeling that it was wrong to speak or smile, that the dead must be mourned with long faces and lugubrious tones, had never had much hold upon her. Roland did not misunderstand her composure. He saw that it was the composure of self-control, not of heartlessness ; and he honoured her for it. Like many men not blessed with the power of apt expression, he was quick in apprehension and sympathy. He could read the truth in her steady eyes ; and was more moved by the faintest momentary tremor in her voice than he would have been by tears and cries and self-pity. And Helen felt at once that it was so. Roland and she stood heart to heart from the first.

‘Have you read my mother’s letter ?’ Roland asked after the first inquiries were over.

‘Yes. It is very good of her. She asks me to go up to Wrentham whenever it suits me.’

Will you go? I hope you will.'

'Yes. I thought I would go in a few days, when I have got some things I want. Mrs. Barr is ready to stay with me till I get a nurse.'

'That's right. I will go too and take care of you. I have been intending to take a week's holiday.'

'Oh, I am glad! That will be delightful!'

'When can you go? Why not start to-morrow?'

'I *could* go to-morrow perhaps, but wouldn't it be rather sudden? Lady Mary may not expect me so soon.'

'Oh yes; it's all right. I will telegraph, and you can write a line to-day. There's no one there now, of course, and I think they will like it.'

Helen hesitated. She did not want to rush at Lady Mary's invitation, and she really would have liked a few days to get some clothes for herself and the child.

Roland saw the doubt in her face. 'My mother's letter was—kind and nice, wasn't it?' he asked.

'Oh yes,' she answered with a blush. 'It isn't that. I only wanted to see Georgie Beamish and do a little shopping. But I think I can manage. Very well, I will go to-morrow if you like.'

'Well done. It will be much better for you than being in London. We might start by the afternoon train, which gets in about six.'

'That will suit me very well.'

'Hurrah! That's settled. I will come and lunch

with you if you will have me, and we can go on together.'

When they had arranged this, Helen gave Roland a packet of letters and newspaper cuttings, all that bore in any way upon Guy's death. 'You will like to see these,' she said. 'Don't read them now, but take them away with you. You will be very careful of them, won't you ?'

'Yes, dear. Thank you very much for letting me see them.'

Then she went on to talk of Roland's work. He was quite sure he could get away without inconvenience ? Yes, quite sure. He was only working with a friend to try and learn something and do some little good if possible while he was waiting for a curacy. He had been intending to go away for a week, and really only stopped to meet her. Her sympathetic interest in his work soon set him off, and before long he was talking eagerly about it all; about the distress and destitution and misery around him, and about the hopes that he had formed—vain hopes, the visions of a hot young heart which had never known defeat and disappointment. It is a hard lesson to learn, the universal lesson, that success cannot be commanded ; that you cannot beat down falsehood and cruelty and wrong ; that if you behave like a gentleman you cannot even carve out personal greatness.

As Helen sat listening to Roland, she was constantly haunted by that likeness to Guy. Roland

was not as tall or as handsome ; in fact, she thought he looked rather delicate. He was wanting too in Guy's brightness of thought and manner. But the likeness was very strong ; and there was his voice, Guy's voice, in tone and accent. Wonderfully like, she kept thinking ; and very gentle and loving and earnest. She felt that he would be as dear to her as a brother of her own would have been.

He lunched with her next day, and took her to the station, and looked after her in the most thoughtful way. He tipped the guard and got her an empty compartment, and he loaded her with literature enough to last her to the north of Scotland ; and he would have carried the baby if she had let him. At almost every station he appeared at the window and inquired whether there was anything he could do, until at last she fairly laughed at him, and forbade him to come any more. Dear Ro, was it possible that two days ago she had never seen him ? It seemed as if she had known him for years.

When they arrived at Wrentham they found the brougham waiting for them. Roland wished to walk home and leave it for Helen and her encumbrances, but Helen begged him to come with her. ' Do come,' she said ; ' it will be such a help to me. Mrs. Barr and baby can come in a fly ; there is one there.'

Roland saw she did want him, and he agreed at once. Baby was fast asleep and quite happy in Mrs. Barr's arms. As they drove along through the sweet spring

evening, Roland showed Helen a number of things of which she remembered hearing Guy speak. There was One-tree Hill, and the cross-roads where the meet used to be sometimes, and the view over the country from Shersby corner, and the village, and the bridge. At last they drove through the lodge gates, and Roland said, 'Here we are; now we shall be at home in three minutes.'

Helen's heart was beating fast. There was something of pleasure in the idea of seeing Guy's home and Guy's people, but there was more of dread. Roland guessed her feeling and tried to help her.

'It's rather an ordeal,' he said, 'being suddenly plunged into a whole new family, but it will soon be over; you won't find us very formidable,' and he took the little gloved hand in his.

Helen smiled and said, 'I am not afraid;' but the smile was rather nervous.

They were in the big courtyard now, and now at the door. She walked up the steps into the hall. How well she knew it by description!

Roland asked where Lady Mary was. 'In her ladyship's room, sir.' Mr. Langley and the young ladies were out.

'Come along, Helen, this way,' Roland said, and he took her through a passage at the back of the hall to the drawing-room, where he left her. 'I will go and tell my mother you've come.'

Helen stood by the mantelpiece in the drawing-

room for a minute or two, and then the door opened and Lady Mary walked in. It was an embarrassing meeting on both sides, but both went through it well. Lady Mary came forward not unkindly; she did not smile, and her manner was not warm, but she kissed Helen's forehead and hoped she was not very tired by the journey. Helen looked at her and saw the strong likeness to Guy, and saw also the lines of sorrow on the fine resolute face. She was touched, and answered gently; and Lady Mary reluctantly acknowledged in her heart that Guy's wife had an attractive face and manner. She asked where the boy was.

‘I told my nurse to take him upstairs; shall I go and fetch him?’

‘No; I will come up and show you where we have put you. You will be glad of a rest and some tea.’

Helen thanked her and followed in silence. It was a charming room, looking out upon the wooded knoll at the back of the house; and baby was awake, lying on the bed and kicking happily. Lady Mary went straight to the bedside and stooped over him and kissed him; she seemed really inclined to take to the child, and for the moment her manner to Helen became softer and more affectionate. When the tea came and she went away, she was talking pleasantly. There was still a shyness between the two, but it was a much better reception than Helen had hoped for.

She did a little baby-worship, and drank her tea; then she looked round her room, and there came to

her, as there had come to Guy, a sudden sense of the contrast between Indian and English homes. She had not realised the difference so much while in India, but coming back it struck her vividly. Everything here was so old and settled and luxurious; everything there so rough and temporary. She looked out of the window.⁷ How beautiful it was, the great trees in their light spring foliage, and the grassy slope with the rabbits playing about it, and the glade beyond!

When Helen came down to dinner she found Roland and her father-in-law in the drawing-room. Charles Langley received her very kindly, and Helen liked him; he was a gentleman in his manners, courteous and frank. Then the girls came in; they were pleasant enough too, but she could see little likeness to Guy, and there was nothing about either of them that greatly attracted her, nothing in the least like Roland's warmth of feeling. The evening passed off well enough. Charles Langley found his daughter-in-law a very agreeable neighbour; he was more than pleased, and showed it. Lady Mary looked on without saying much, her face wearing at times a slightly contemptuous expression; men were so easily taken in. Roland was glad to see his father and Helen getting on together, and he left them to themselves and chatted away to his sisters.

After prayers Roland suggested that Helen must be tired; and, as Lady Mary appeared to be going too, Helen went off to bed willingly enough. Roland

lighted her candle and walked up to her room with her. She seemed much happier, and when they reached her door he said, 'Well, you see it wasn't very bad after all, was it ?'

'No,' she answered ; 'I can't thank you enough for all your goodness. I did dread it so.'

He laughed and kissed her, and went downstairs again, to find the rest of the family still in the hall. It was rather cold, and they were standing round the fire. 'Well,' he said, as he came up to them, 'isn't she everything I said ? Isn't she just the very sweetest woman you ever saw ?'

'I must say I think she is as nice as she could be,' his father answered.

Lady Mary looked sarcastic. 'A pretty face goes a long way with all of you.'

'Oh no, mother, it isn't that ; but she is so gentle and straight and plucky. I never met any one that struck me as such a perfect lady in all her thoughts and ways.'

'My dear Roland,' Lady Mary said, 'that is simply nonsense. She has good looks of a certain kind, and a self-possessed manner, but to speak as you do is quite absurd.'

'I am sorry you think so, mother, but I can't help feeling as I do.'

'No doubt, but very young men are not always very good judges in these matters.'

Poor Roland ! he had hoped all was going so well.

Had he set his mother against her now? 'Well, mother, anyhow I hope you won't let anything I have said prejudice you against her.'

'I am not much given to prejudices; I shall judge for myself irrespectively of anything you may say, and I hope I may come to think as you do, though I'm afraid it is hardly likely.'

Roland sighed, and looked worried.

Little more was said that evening, but the next day it became evident to Helen that Lady Mary's manner to her was certainly not more cordial than at first. There was nothing she could complain of, but at times she found Lady Mary's eyes resting upon her with a look of criticism which made her uncomfortable; and Lady Mary neither spoke to her about Guy nor encouraged her to speak about him. The love these two women had borne to him was not a bond between them, but a barrier. Lady Mary could not help still looking upon Helen as the girl who had hunted and entrapped her son. She could forgive, she thought: she was righteous, and she had forgiven; but the fact remained, and she could not forget. She had no inclination even now to recognise Helen's part in him by talking to her about him. It was an illogical state of feeling, when she had asked Helen as Guy's widow to come to Wrentham; but feeling and logic are sworn foes. Helen, on her part, was very willing to accord to Lady Mary as Guy's mother the fullest measure of consideration. She had always done so;

but her view of the case was that in the past Lady Mary had behaved unfairly to her and unkindly to him. She thought she had much more to forgive than Lady Mary had, and though ready to forgive, she was not in the least ready to be forgiven and treated as a pardoned offender. Finally, Lady Mary irritated her by words and acts which gave her clearly to understand that her mother-in-law regarded her as a person wholly unacquainted with the usages of civilised life. Helen's experience of English travellers in India had perhaps made her unduly sensitive on this point, and she resented Lady Mary's behaviour as impertinent. She resented it the more from a consciousness that in some respects after years of Indian life she did feel a little strange to English ways.

So, as the days went by, the mother and the wife both realised that they were not coming together. They seemed, on the contrary, to be drifting further apart. If Guy was not to be a bond to them, what bond had they? It was true that there was the boy. Lady Mary would have liked to keep him; she would have liked it more than Helen ever suspected, but keeping the boy involved keeping the mother, and she could not make up her mind to that. For a time indeed she did actually bring herself to contemplate the possibility. She might take the line that the Treveryans were a good old Cornish family, and that Helen was everything she should be. Unhappily she had committed herself too deeply to the opposite view.

What would the Schneiders think, and the many friends who had known her vehement efforts to break off the engagement, and had heard her incautious language on the subject? No, it was bad enough now; it would be intolerable then. She could not let them all see that this wretched Indian girl had beaten her all along the line, and established herself at Wrentham itself. Besides, she rightly reflected that mixed households rarely answer; they would inevitably have disagreements. Even if Helen had been everything that was nice this would have been the case, and it would be doubly certain now. She felt she could not live with Guy's captor without occasionally showing some soreness. The girl had ruined Guy; she had hunted and entrapped him and ruined him. His own conduct when he came home made this quite clear. She had a cool, determined manner too, which might mean opposition and impertinence. Then there were the girls; who could say what harm she might do them? No, it would never do.

In the meantime, nothing would have induced Helen to make Wrentham her home, if she had been asked to do so; but this Lady Mary never suspected. And then an insane idea occurred to her. Why should keeping the child involve keeping the mother? Why not keep the child and let the mother go? Her mother's heart should have warned her that such a thing was impossible. She did, in fact, hesitate; but she was blinded by her pride and her dislike, and the

idea grew upon her. After all, people did give up their children in certain cases ; and Helen was poor, and she had never really cared for Guy. What was she, after all, but a common adventuress, the daughter of some disreputable old father in India who called himself a Colonel, and very likely was nothing of the kind ? Probably she would jump at the chance. In dealing with this class of people it was a mistake to be too tender and delicate. If Helen did not agree, it could not be helped ; better not have the child than have both. In any case, she would have done her duty.

Lady Mary broached the idea to her husband, and her husband strenuously objected. He was all for keeping Helen at Wrentham, if she cared to stay ; but he begged Lady Mary not to offer to keep the child alone. ‘For God’s sake, don’t do that,’ he said ; ‘I shall never be able to look her in the face again.’

His opposition irritated his wife, and she replied scornfully, ‘Nonsense ! You imagine that because she has a pretty face she must have all sorts of refined feelings. Make it worth her while and you will see.’

Charles Langley looked at his wife with something very near disgust in his face. He realised more clearly than ever what had occasionally dawned upon him before, that her ladyship was at heart a snob.

She went on to argue that after all it was only what Helen would have had to do if she had remained in India, and Guy had lived. Indian children were always sent to England. As to letting Helen stay at

Wrentham, it really would not be right to expose the girls to such a risk ; and so on and so on.

Charles Langley resisted warmly, almost angrily, and he finished as usual by washing his hands of the whole thing. ‘ You must do as you please,’ he said ; ‘ but I don’t like it, and I feel certain she won’t.’

Lady Mary had got her own way again, and she was strong in protesting that her way was the right way. ‘ Whether we like it or not, we ought to do it ; and she ought to see that it is her duty to think of the boy’s interests. I hope she will see it.’

To do Lady Mary justice, she was not perfectly clear in her own mind as to what she intended. She had some vague idea of a gradual separation between mother and child, and did not contemplate an immediate and absolute severance. The mother would very likely go back to India, and try to find some other deluded man to marry her, and then the severance would come about naturally. But in any case she meant to keep the boy, and not to keep the mother.

Accordingly when, after a week’s stay, Helen remarked that she must bring her visit to an end, Lady Mary recognised her opportunity. They were alone, and not likely to be interrupted. ‘ Must you really go ? ’ she said ; ‘ I am sorry you can’t stay a little longer.’

‘ It is very kind of you, but I have a good deal to do in London, and am afraid I must go.’ Helen did

not add what she thought: 'Roland is going, and whatever he may say, I cannot stay here without him.'

'Well,' Lady Mary answered, 'of course if you must, you must; but I hope you are going to let us take care of the boy for you. I have been intending to ask you about that.'

Helen thought the offer was merely a temporary one, made to oblige her, and, though surprised, she answered quietly: 'Thank you. It is very good of you to think of it, but I could not leave baby. He is a great traveller, and quite accustomed to roughing it.'

Her quietness emboldened Lady Mary, who thought the refusal a mere preliminary. 'I quite understand your feeling,' she said, 'it is a very natural one; but you must excuse my saying that in a matter of this kind it is not a question of feeling only. You must remember that the child's interests are concerned. He is a Langley, and it might at some future time make all the difference in the world to him whether he had been carefully brought up here in his father's home, or grown up away from us all. And it would be better for yourself too. I am sure that Mr. Langley would take care of that.'

As Lady Mary spoke she saw comprehension dawning in Helen's eyes, and with it such a sudden flame of wrath as made her realise before she stopped that she had made a mistake. She hesitated as she ended her sentence, and her hesitation was tinged with something like alarm as Helen sprang up and faced her.

Helen was in truth very angry. There were some things which were not to be borne. This woman who had scorned her, and tried to set Guy against her, who had driven him out of his regiment, and caused his death, now ventured to bring in his name as an excuse for offering to buy her only child away from her breasts. It was too much. Her face was white and her hands trembling.

‘You dare to say that to me !’ she cried, her anger sweeping away in a moment all self-control and sense of justice. ‘You never loved him, never. I knew you did not. You tried to take him from me, and to break his heart and mine ; and now you try to take his child from me too, the only thing I have in the world. Oh, why did I come here to be insulted ?’

Lady Mary’s alarm was only momentary. Helen’s words brought the light of battle to her eyes, and as she caught a ring of misery in the girl’s voice her heart hardened. Helen was her guest in her house, but Helen had chosen war, and she should have war with a vengeance.

‘I think you had better sit down and try to control yourself,’ Lady Mary began, with a face of stern contempt. ‘I am not accustomed to scenes of this kind ; but, as you accuse me of trying to break Guy’s heart, I may as well tell you at once that there was never the smallest question of that. I did try to save him from making an undesirable marriage, which he had already begun to repent ; and when he left us he had

no intention whatever of going on with it. In fact he had made other plans. You know best in what circumstances you succeeded in making him change his mind again, although your father was fully aware of the state of the case; and you know the result. But for you he would never have had to leave the army, and he would be alive now. If you had really cared for him you would have set him free. Instead of that you chose to take advantage of his generosity, and you are responsible for his ruin and his death.'

Helen was listening quietly now. She was already ashamed of her anger, or rather of her want of self-control; and though she felt that Lady Mary was unjust to her, cruelly unjust, she felt also that Guy's love for her had in a sense been the cause of his death. She had felt that bitterly enough before now. In any case there was no good in discussing it, and in quarrelling with his mother over his grave. For a moment she did not answer. She was wondering whether there was any truth in the statement that Guy had repented his engagement to her; and then she thought of their meeting at the Syntia station.

'Guy never showed any wish to be set free,' she said at last. 'If he had I should not have stood in his way. He knew that.' She spoke gently, almost as if she were speaking to herself.

Lady Mary smiled, a smile which made Helen set her teeth hard. Then, as Lady Mary remained silent, Helen went on: 'Of course after what you have said

I cannot stay here beyond to-night. I should prefer going at once, but that might be a trouble to others ; so, if you will allow me, I will arrange to go by the morning train after breakfast.'

'As you please. I hope you may not live to be sorry for your very intemperate, and I think very ungrateful, behaviour.'

Helen left the room without reply, and Lady Mary smiled again. She had very soon brought the girl to order. People did not attack her with impunity. And it was just as well the arrangement had fallen through ; it would never have answered. It was a pity in some ways, but at all events she had the satisfaction of feeling that she had done her duty.

CHAPTER XLI

REVOLT

BEFORE dinner that evening Helen tried to get hold of Roland, and tell him what had happened. She felt ashamed and unhappy. If only she had taken it quietly and refused without anger, how much better it would have been. Now she had put herself in the wrong, and she was afraid that the thing might make mischief for him. Unluckily Roland was out. He had gone for a walk with his father, and did not return till dinner-time. When he came down to dinner every one was assembled, and she had no chance of speaking to him.

Almost the first thing her father-in-law said was, 'So you really are going to run away from us to-morrow? I am very sorry you can't stay a little longer.' Lady Mary had told him all about it, and advised him to take it as a matter of course.

Roland looked up. 'Going to-morrow, Helen? Why, you never said anything about it this morning. Why must you go?'

‘I am afraid I must, really,’ Helen answered. ‘I made up my mind this afternoon.’

‘Can’t you even stay till Monday?’ Roland said; ‘you can’t have such very urgent business.’

Helen looked uncomfortable. ‘I am afraid I must go.’

Charles Langley interfered. ‘I am not going to have you worried. You shall do exactly as you like; only I hope you will soon come back again.’

Helen smiled and thanked him. Roland looked at his mother; she sat silent with a face of stone, and he began to see there was something wrong. The girls suspected something too, and looked at one another. However, the evening passed away without further reference to the subject. Helen and her father-in-law talked to each other most of the time. Roland was very quiet.

After prayers Helen made her excuses and went to her room. Roland lighted her candle and walked upstairs with her. ‘What is it, Helen?’ he said; ‘I hope there is nothing wrong?’

‘I will tell you some other time. I am afraid I have been very foolish. You must not stay now.’

‘I shall go up to town with you to-morrow.’

‘No, please don’t—to please me. It will only make trouble.’

‘Then tell me what has happened.’

‘Well, your mother said something that I daresay she meant kindly, and I lost my temper, and said

things I ought not to have said, and made her angry. I meant to have told you before, but you were out.'

'Can't it be put right ?'

'No. I know what she feels about me now ; and I could not stay here a day longer than necessary. Now you must go, dear. Your mother won't like your staying with me. Good-night.'

Roland sighed. 'I am sorry,' he said. 'I did so hope it would be all right.'

'I am very sorry to have brought you any trouble. I have reproached myself ever since ; but you must go, please.'

Roland walked downstairs gloomily, to find the circle breaking up. 'May I come with you, mother, for a few minutes ?'

'Certainly. Come up to my room.'

When they were in Lady Mary's dressing-room, she turned upon him. 'Now, Roland, what is it ?'

'What has gone wrong between you and Helen, mother ?'

'Hasn't she told you ?'

'She said she had made you angry, and I gathered that you said something which made it impossible for her to stay here any longer.'

'Oh, that is her account, is it ? Well, if you wish to know the truth, she told me she was going away, and I offered to take charge of Guy's child. She chose to be offended at this, and was extremely rude and violent, as people of that kind always are. I

never allow any one to be insolent to me, as you know, and I told her a few home truths which very quickly made her change her tone. Then she said she would not stay in the house, and I told her that she could do as she pleased. That is the whole story. I don't know that it is any affair of yours, but as you wish to know it, I have told you.'

'I can't imagine Helen being rude and violent,' Roland said. 'I suppose she misunderstood you in some way.'

'Whether you can imagine it or not, she was so; and she did not misunderstand me in the least. I was very careful to explain myself, and to point out that it would be for the child's interest and her own to hand it over to us. I told her your father would behave liberally to her.'

'Mother! you don't mean to say you offered her money to give up the child and go away?'

'What do you mean? I offered to take upon myself all the trouble and responsibility of bringing it up. There are not many people, I fancy, who would have done as much. Naturally, she could not stay here too.'

'Good heavens, mother! I should never have believed it if you had not told me. How could you expect her to be anything but indignant? What would you have said if any one had made you such an offer?'

That argument was fatal. It was the argument of a fool. Lady Mary fairly lost her temper over it,

and there was a sharp difference of opinion between her and her son. Her view was that she had behaved with extreme kindness and generosity to a girl who had done her incalculable evil, and that she was now being requited with ingratitude and insolence. Roland's view was that his mother had treated the sweetest lady on earth as if she were devoid of all feeling and utterly mercenary, and that such treatment had been naturally resented. The two views were irreconcilable, and before the discussion was over both Roland and his mother had spoken rather pointedly. It ended by Roland saying, 'Well, mother, it is no use my talking any more. I shall take her up to town to-morrow. I am very sorry indeed that this has happened.'

'So am I. I dislike scenes of this kind excessively; but perhaps it is just as well to have got it over.'

'Good-night, mother.'

'Good-night.'

Lady Mary felt sore and angry. Both husband and son were ready to take the part of this wretched girl against her. What fools men were!

Roland went to his father's den, and knocked at the door. He found Charles Langley standing with his back to the mantelpiece, thinking. Apparently his thoughts were not very pleasant, for he looked worried. 'Well, Ro, what is it ?'

'Has my mother told you about this trouble with Helen ?'

‘Yes.’

‘I don’t like it, father. It makes me feel very unhappy.’

‘I am very sorry for it too, but I don’t see what is to be done. Apparently she spoke in a way that your mother could not stand ; and the thing has gone too far to be mended now.’

‘I don’t wonder at her being angry if she was asked to give up her child for a consideration.’

‘That is hardly the way to put it, I think ; but there is no use in discussing the thing. From what your mother tells me, it is out of the question that they can ever be on good terms again, and we must just make the best of it. Shall you have a chance of talking to her before she goes to-morrow ?’

‘I came to tell you that I am going with her.’

‘Are you ? Your mother won’t like it.’

‘I told her, and she made no objection. I don’t want people to think there is anything wrong ; and besides, Helen is very lonely and helpless in London.’

‘You seem very fond of her, Ro.’

‘Yes, I am. I believe she behaved as well as possible about Guy all through ; and,—I feel very guilty about her.’

Roland looked at his father, and Charles Langley understood. He sighed and shifted his position. ‘I am afraid we were a bit hard upon her,’ he said. Roland did not answer, and his father went on : ‘I want her to let me give her what I used to give

Guy. I suppose she is not well off. Do you think you could arrange it ?'

'I can ask her if you like, but I don't think she will take it. Won't you ask her yourself ?'

'No, I would rather not. Try to manage it if you can.'

'All right, father. Say a few kind words to her when she is going, won't you ? She likes you and will feel it.'

'Poor girl ! I can't let her suppose I think she was right in this affair, but I will say what I can. I wish this had never happened.'

'So do I, more than I can say.'

'Well, good-night, Ro. I must go to bed now ; but remember I shall always be ready to help her if I can. Let me know if there is anything I can do.'

After breakfast next morning Helen said good-bye to Wrentham. Lady Mary was not down, she had a severe headache ; but she sent word that she would like to see Helen in her room, if Helen would not mind going up. Helen went accordingly, and found Lady Mary standing ready to receive her.

'Good-morning,' Helen said, as she closed the door.

'Good-morning. I asked you to come to me, because I thought we had better not say good-bye in public. Don't let me detain you now. I think the carriage has come round.'

'Good-bye, Lady Mary. I only wish to say before

I go that I am sorry I spoke to you as I did yesterday. I have no doubt you meant to do what was kind.'

Lady Mary bowed slightly. She was not to be taken in ; it was too late now. Helen looked at her, and seeing that she did not intend any further acknowledgment, turned and left the room. She had brought herself to make the apology, but for the moment she repented it. Nothing had been said about the child.

Charles Langley's farewell was more cordial ; in fact, it was as warm and affectionate as it could well have been. He kissed Helen, and told her how he wished she could have stayed longer, and begged her to come again whenever she felt inclined. He knew he was safe there, but he meant all he said nevertheless, and Helen knew he meant it, and was really sorry to say good-bye to him. The girls were pleasant enough too. They had been taught to regard Helen with something more than suspicion, and they had held aloof from her at first with a mixture of fascination and fear ; but they had failed to detect the cloven hoof. Really the terrible Indian woman was not very different from other people.

Helen soon settled down in London. It was very dreary, living in two or three rooms in a small house in South Kensington ; but it was less dreary than going anywhere out of London. Roland came constantly to see her in the evening, and she began to take an interest in his work. She could not live

where he did, as it would not have been healthy for the child ; and having the child to look after, she could not do much to help him ; but she learnt much from him, and her advice and her slender purse were always at his service. A few of her father's Indian friends found her out, and were very kind to her. She did not want to meet any but real friends ; but it did her good to see faces she had seen in her happy Indian days, and to hear her father spoken of, as he always was spoken of, with honest affection and regret. They had actually been with her in the dear old house, one or two of them, and could talk about Syntia, and had seen Guy. It warmed her heart. Then she had her music, and Rex, and above all she had the baby, who was a most beautiful and surprising child, never ill and hardly ever cross, with eyes that became more and more like Guy's every day. She was not therefore wholly without interest and work in life.

As Roland had foreseen, Helen would not accept the allowance offered to her. When he spoke about it, she flushed up and interrupted him : 'Never, Roland ; I would sooner starve than take a farthing of it. I know your father means to be kind, and I don't want to seem ungrateful. Please give him my love and thanks ; but I could not do it. Please don't speak to me any more about it.'

The spring passed into summer, and the summer into autumn, and still Helen remained in London.

At times she pined for a breath of country air, but she could not make up her mind to go. She did not like leaving Roland, and, moreover, she felt disinclined to face any change or exertion. Better stay where she was, and be quiet.

Helen had been a woman of strong religious feeling and belief, but on the day when Mrs. Aylmer had come to her with the news of Guy's death, her religion had received a heavy shock. She had suddenly found that in her time of need it was no help whatever. She felt that she did not love the God who had dealt so hardly with her, and she had nothing left to pray for. What was the good of prayer if she might not pray for death or for Guy's life? Besides, prayer would not be answered. She had prayed for Guy's life night and day, and the answer had been his murder. If she prayed for her own death, the answer would be long life. As time went on her heart only seemed to grow more cold and numb, and she shrank more and more from all religious observances. Roland tried hard to help her. He had soon found out that she had little or no comfort in such things, and it distressed and puzzled him. He could not understand her weary hopelessness in this respect. It seemed to him inconsistent with her composure and courage and sense. She went to church sometimes to please him, and occasionally it seemed to do her good. The music and the cadence of the old familiar words, and the dim religious light, all tended to soothe and quiet her.

But at other times the service seemed to have the opposite effect. She felt she had no right to be there ; that she was joining in prayers and praises which she did not feel ; that the whole thing was a sham. Then she revolted, and Roland was disappointed of the victory he hoped he had gained. Altogether he was greatly troubled about her. In his youthful ardour it seemed to him that his new-found panacea of religion ought to be sufficient for everything, and it was a constant wonder to him to find her so insensible to its power. Should not the Lord of all the earth do right ? Surely she must know He would not lay this cruel sorrow on her but for her good. She shook her head at his platitudes.

‘I know, dear,’ she would say. ‘I have said that to myself often enough, but it does not help me in the least. I have to bear it, I can’t do anything else ; but I cannot pretend to be content and thankful.’

He begged her to pray.

‘I will if I can, Ro ; but what is the use ? I cannot believe now in prayers being answered ; and if I do not believe, they will not be answered. You know that.’

‘Try. Faith will come with prayer.’

But she shook her head, and was silent.

At times she even spoke bitterly, as if God had deceived her and mocked her. ‘I had been praying so hard, Ro, not only on my knees, but all day in my thoughts, and I had faith. Then Guy’s telegram

came, and I was so happy and grateful. I did not forget to give thanks. I felt as if I never could thank God enough. For days my whole heart was full of love and thankfulness. And all the time Guy was dead ! God had let him be murdered.'

Yet, in spite of all, Roland felt that Helen was true and good. If she was sore and bitter at times in speaking to him about the God who had crushed her heart, it was the bitterness of a noble nature. She still forgave the wrongs that others had done her. She spoke humbly of her own faults, and gently of his mother. She was kind and tender and helpful to all around her. She was never hard or flippant. Surely the rest would come.

He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small.

In the end she would find resignation and peace, if not happiness. Even now at times she seemed to feel more as he would have had her feel. The child seemed to be leading her into it. He was a beautiful boy, good-tempered and strong and handsome, in spite of all his mother's troubles. He and Roland were the best of friends. Helen used to look on sometimes with real happiness in her eyes as they romped on the floor together; and she was beginning to regain a little colour. Often enough she would turn away with a sigh as her sorrow came back to her; but still at times it was driven off for the moment, and she

could be cheerful and bright. She was not five-and-twenty yet.

Then came the final blow.

Baby had learnt to crawl about the floor at a great pace, and even to stand with the help of a chair, when one November morning his mother woke at the sound of a choking cough, and her heart stood still with fear.

It is needless to linger over the story of the next few days. Helen found it easy to pray then. While the child lay before her in its suffering,—the pitiful childish suffering that tears a man's heart to witness, and is a hundred times worse than death to a mother—she prayed incessantly, passionately, that its life might be spared, that her rebellion and ingratitude and want of faith might be forgiven, and that its life might be spared. And once more she prayed in vain. The child grew weaker and weaker, till its little thin hands could no longer be held up to the tortured woman, half maddened with her helplessness. At last there was an unavailing struggle for breath, and then the little hands were still for ever, and the little face lay white and lifeless on the pillow.

Helen and Roland stood by the side of the grave when the service was read. It was raining heavily, and the wind was so strong that he was unable to keep her sheltered from the wet. She was quiet and silent until they began to lower the coffin. Then she stepped forward with a sudden cry—‘No, no!’ and stopped, and was quiet again.

They drove back together, Helen still tearless and white, with her mouth set close. Roland tried to comfort her in his honest clumsy way, but it was useless. She seemed hardly to hear what he said.

At last, when they were near home, he took her hand and begged her to speak. 'For God's sake, Helen,' he said, 'try to say it. It will help you. You will say it in the end. Say it now, and take the relief it will bring you. Say, "Thy will be done."

She took her hand away and shook her head in silence. 'Never,' she thought,—'never, as long as I live!'

CHAPTER XLII

ILLNESS

THE day after the funeral Helen went again to her child's grave. It was still raining hard, and everything looked unspeakably desolate; and for the second time she came back cold and wet. That night she was seized with acute pains in the side and shoulders, and next morning she was forced to send for a doctor.

The illness that followed was very nearly fatal. She had been thoroughly overtried during the past year; and, lowered as she was by want of sleep and food, the wet and exposure had been too much for her. The torture of pleurisy was increased by pneumonia, and for some weeks her life lay trembling in the balance. At times she was delirious, and then she suffered cruelly from the idea that something she had done had been the cause of her child's death. It was pitiful to watch her painfully striving hour after hour to see the face of the spectre which mocked and eluded her. When her mind cleared it was there,—the thought that if she had sold the child to Lady Mary it might be alive. Then relief came; but with fever

and delirium the idea assumed its spectral shape again, and she began once more the eager agonised chase.

At last youth and a sound constitution asserted themselves, and Helen began to gain strength ; but her recovery was slow. She had no wish to get well, to have life without any of the things which make life worth having. Getting well meant taking up her burden again, and she dreaded it unfeignedly. Roland tried hard to rouse her, but she seemed beyond rousing. She lay very patiently, doing all she was told to do, but showing no interest in anything. She hardly seemed to listen if he read to her, though she always thanked him. She never smiled now ; and she was dreadfully white and thin, with very big eyes, clearer and more beautiful than ever, but intensely sad. The feeling had come to her that she was one of those doomed to suffer continual ill-fortune, and to bring ill-fortune on others. Everything had gone wrong with her and hers. She begged Roland not to trouble himself about her any more. ‘ What does it matter, Ro ? ’ she said ; ‘ I am no good to any one. Why do you worry yourself when you have so much to do ? ’ But to Roland she was dearer now than all the world.

As she became strong enough to travel, the doctors advised her to leave London and go down to the west coast in order to avoid the cold and wet of early spring. It was an effort and she did not want to go, but Roland pressed her and she gave in. ‘ Very well,

dear,' she said; 'I will go if you like. Where am I to go to?'

'They say South Devon or somewhere in that direction. Do you know any place on the coast?'

'No. I used to live in Cornwall when I was a girl; but our house is broken up, and I could not go back there. It was a very lonely country.'

Then it occurred to her that old Power was living in Torquay. After Miss Treveryan's death she had settled there, and supported herself by letting lodgings. 'Dear old thing,' Helen said, 'she would be delighted to have me if she could, I know; she thinks there never was any one in the world like us.' As she spoke the idea grew upon her. She would like to see that honest old face again; it would be like a bit of her girlhood. She would hear all about her aunt's death from the one who had been with her to the end; and she would be near Cornwall too. It would feel more like home to be among the soft-spoken West-country folk again.

Roland caught at the suggestion. 'But I thought the race of old family servants was at an end,' he said.

Helen's mind was back in the past. 'I used to be very fond of her. She came to my grandmother when she was a girl, and when my grandmother died she stayed at Laneithin as my aunt's maid. "Pow" I always called her. She was a dear merry little woman, with bright brown eyes like a robin's; and she

was just as brave and impudent as a robin ; and she had a shy, nervous manner which made her impudence all the more delightful. I don't believe she ever thought of herself. She was always at work, and did everything well, from cooking a dinner to making a dress. She would have gone through fire and water for a Treveryan. Dear old Pow ! she used to go everywhere with me, and the more trouble I gave her the better she seemed to like it. I *should* like to see her again.'

It was a long time since Roland had seen Helen so much interested. She had a touch of colour in her face, and her eyes were bright. 'Why didn't you try to get hold of her before ?' he asked.

'I did try, directly my aunt died, four or five years ago ; but I was in India, and it was too late. She had joined her sister in taking a house to let in lodgings ; I believe she would have come even then if she had not promised. When my aunt was alive her people tried to get her away ; some of them had gone to Canada and got on very well I believe, and they wanted her to join them, but she never would go. She never would marry either,—always used to laugh at the poor men and refuse. She really cared for us much more than she did for any one else.'

'Well, I think that is splendid. We will write and ask her ; if she can't have us herself she will help us.'

'Us, Ro ? You are not coming ?'

‘Of course I am; I shall take you down and see you settled. I want a rest badly, and I can get away for a week. I have been working nearly a year on end.’

‘How good you are to me! but you ought to spend your holiday at Wrentham.’

‘I shall spend my holiday exactly as I please, and I please to spend it with you. Besides, I have been to Wrentham two or three times in the year.’

So it was settled. Helen wrote to Power, and got an answer by return of post, such a delighted, affectionate answer that it brought the tears to her eyes. It was not very elegantly written or very correctly spelt,—there were no school-boards in Power’s young days,—but it was brimful of welcome and real downright honest love. By good luck a set of Power’s rooms would be vacant in a week. It was just what they wanted.

Roland and Helen started for Torquay one morning in February. As they got away from London the sky grew clear, and before long they were in bright sunshine. The winter seemed to be over, the ground was soft, and there was a delicious feeling of spring in the air. Helen got through the journey very well, and seemed to enjoy the sight of the country through which they passed. ‘How beautiful England is!’ she said; ‘there is nothing like it after all, every mile has something new. When one has lived out of it for a time one sees the beauty of our English trees and

our soft rolling country. The flat plains of India are so monotonous in comparison, and the mountains so rugged and bare, and in some places even ugly.'

'I don't know India,' Roland said; 'but surely you don't think England as beautiful as Switzerland or Italy?'

'Yes I do. I suppose in some ways they are finer, and one admires them for a change, but it seems to me that they are not really as beautiful. They are like some faces one sees, very handsome and striking; but England has a sweet face. You know what I mean?'

'What a John Bull you are!' Roland said; 'but I know what you mean.' And he thought, 'If ever there was a sweet face on earth I see it now.'

When they touched the coast near Dawlish the sea was as blue and smooth as the Mediterranean in summer, and with the rich red colouring of the Devonshire earth it made a bright and lovely picture. At Torquay station the first thing they saw was a little slight figure in black peering at the carriage windows. 'There she is,' Helen said; 'there is old Pow herself come to meet us.'

And Pow it was, with a face full of joy and affection; her smooth hair whiter than it used to be, but otherwise unchanged; there were the little brown eyes and the nervous manner, just as of old.

They drove away from the station in the warm western afternoon. The bay lay before them with hardly a ripple on its surface, and the sound of the

tide on the sands was a low dreamy splash. Here and there people were sitting in the sun. 'How delightful!' Roland said; 'what a difference from London!'

'Burnbraes,' where Power lived, turned out to be a small square house on the opposite side of Torquay. It was as clean as a new pin from roof to cellar; and the neat tastefully-furnished rooms looked out upon a grassy slope beyond which, through the trees, shone a bit of bright blue sea. 'Well, we are in luck,' Roland said, as Pow finally disappeared, after placing a dainty little tea-service by the side of the sofa on which she had made Helen lie down. 'What a dear old soul it is! I shall feel quite comfortable in leaving you here. Why, no lady could have done everything more perfectly.'

'She *is* a lady in all her thoughts and tastes,' Helen said; 'she always was,—my aunt used often to say so. She can't spell, and she is not sure of her h's, but she has not an atom of vulgarity in her.'

Here after a few days Roland left Helen established. She had been very tired the day after her arrival, but was quite refreshed by a long morning in bed, and on the following day she was able to go for a drive. They had several pleasant drives before he went, and got familiar with the broad bay, and the long straight line of Berry Head, and the bold rocks and clear water of Anstis Cove, and the white beaches of Babbicombe. They looked down from the high

red cliffs upon the open sea, with its toy-like fishing-boats, and its masses of purple and green ; and they saw and admired and avoided the steep rolling hills inland, with their bright-coloured earth and their springing crops and wooded summits.

After Roland's departure Helen found herself very lonely. Power saved her from all the ordinary discomforts and worries of such a life, and was a real companion and friend to her. There was Rex too, dear Rex, who never left her side ; and she had an unfailing comfort in her music. She did not sing now, but she sat and played softly to herself hour after hour through the long evenings, her taste and touch becoming daily more and more chastened and refined. Then there were her books. Before her child died she had begun to read again, and Roland, who was a great reader himself, had encouraged and helped her ; now she took to it once more. Still it was a lonely life, and there were times when it seemed very hard to bear.

As she grew stronger, and became more able to walk, she used to spend a large part of her days in the open air. Her graceful figure and sad face soon grew familiar, and people wondered what her story was. Then one or two friends who had known her father in India, or who had known Miss Treveryan, found her out and tried to be kind to her ; but she did not know them, and though she felt grateful, she was not much drawn towards any of them.

The summer passed away, and nearly a year had gone since she lost her child, nearly two years since Guy's death. She felt quite strong now, and gradually, with returning health, there had come upon her a longing to go back to London and join Roland in his work. She felt that she must find work of some kind, and she wanted to be with him again. During the autumn she wrote to him about it, pressing to be allowed to come up and do some nursing, or anything else for which she might be fitted. Roland protested on various grounds, and eventually referred to her doctor, who at once refused to sanction anything of the kind. 'In May next,' he said, 'if you go on as you are doing, I will make no objection; but it would be madness to go back to London for the winter.' Helen gave in perforce, and though it was a disappointment, she was soon reconciled to the delay. After all, spring would soon come; and in the meantime she would see Roland. He had written to ask whether he might come to her for a week early in January. She would not be alone all the winter.

CHAPTER XLIII

LOVE IS STRONG AS DEATH

ROLAND was coming, but not, as she had hoped, to brighten her new year and gain a little rest and strength for himself.

Soon before Christmas, the time of her mourning, she received a few lines asking her to receive him at once. 'I am afraid,' he wrote, 'that I shall be a great trouble to you. The fact is, I have broken down, and am ordered out of London. My chest has been troubling me a good deal for some time past, and lately the fog and cold have been very trying. I think old Jessop is fond of coddling people, but I do feel as if I could not go on much longer in this atmosphere. I have a longing to see that blue bay again, and to breathe the soft Devonshire air, and, above all, to set eyes upon your face, which will do me more good than anything. So, if your dear old Pow will take me in, I shall come down on Saturday. Only I warn you that you may have to begin your nursing experiences sooner than you expected. You shall try your prentice hand on me.'

Helen telegraphed in reply, 'Come as soon as you can. All ready.'

She went to meet him at the station, and was shocked at the change which had come upon him in a few months. He had a colour in his face, and his eyes were bright; but he was painfully thin, and suffered from an incessant cough. Nevertheless, he seemed quite happy as they drove away. 'I have done all I could,' he said, 'and am free to enjoy my holiday now without feeling guilty. That is one advantage of breaking down. You are spared any doubts as to whether you are doing your duty.'

'I wish you had come away before you broke down,' she said, with her soft eyes shining. 'It seems such a pity to go on too long. Prevention is better than cure.'

Roland laughed merrily. 'Yes, I know; and discretion is the better part of valour, and 'he who fights and runs away may live to fight another day.' You speak like a copy-book. Since when have you taken to those prudent maxims?'

Helen shook her head. 'You know it's true, Ro. You ought to take care of your health for the sake of others if not for your own.'

'What did you say when I told you the same thing about your nursing?'

'Oh, that is a different thing altogether.'

'Is it? Well, we won't fight about it. Anyhow, I have struck work now, and I'm going to do nothing

but eat Devonshire cream, and loaf about in the sun, and read the lightest of literature, and talk to you till you're tired of me.'

' You will have to talk a long time.'

When the excitement and pleasure of arrival had passed away, Roland looked even worse than Helen had feared. Afterwards, for a day or two, he seemed to revive a little, and his spirits were bright enough ; but he had no strength or energy, and his cough was distressing. At times he was feverish. Helen's sorrows had made her expect evil now, and not long after Roland's arrival she pressed the doctor to tell her whether there was any danger of the illness becoming serious. He hesitated, and then said, ' It is always a serious thing when the lungs are in question.'

' Yes ; but you know what I mean, Dr. Melliss. Do you think it is consumption ? '

' I cannot tell you exactly yet. I hope there is no organic disease.'

' Then you do not think he is in immediate danger ? '

' Oh, I hope not. But I shall be able to speak more definitely in a few days.'

A fortnight later Helen knew that her fears were true. She had walked down one morning to the library to change some books, leaving Roland lying on the sofa in the drawing-room. As she came back to the gate she saw Dr. Melliss's carriage in the road, and turning in, she met on the drive the doctor himself,

talking to a tall well-dressed man by his side. His face was grave, and Helen felt a sharp foreboding of evil.

When he saw her Dr. Melliss stopped. 'I'm glad I met you, Mrs. Langley. I wanted to speak to you.' Helen shook hands with him, and he went on: 'I have just been to see your brother-in-law, and as my friend Dr. Earle was with me next door, I took the opportunity of asking him to give me the benefit of his opinion.'

The tall man slightly raised his hat, and Helen was struck by his face. He was young, but there was a look of power about him.

'Yes, Dr. Melliss?'

'I am sorry to say that Dr. Earle's opinion coincides with my own; and that we think the case a very serious one.'

'Will you please speak quite plainly. Do you mean that it is consumption?'

'I am afraid so.'

'Then it is hopeless. He is dying?'

The two men looked at one another, and the elder continued: 'He may live some time yet, but a complete cure is impossible.'

'How long will it be?'

'I can't say. I fear it is a question of a few months. It might be a few weeks only.'

'Is that your opinion, Dr. Earle?'

'I am sorry to say that it is.'

Helen turned to Dr. Melliss again. 'Have you told him ?'

'No, Mrs. Langley. I did not like to do so without speaking to you first.'

'Do you think he suspected anything from seeing Dr. Earle ?'

'Oh no. He seemed quite cheerful, and I took care not to alarm him.'

'It is quite impossible that he can get well ? It is no use taking him away to Madeira or anywhere ?'

'I am afraid not. He could not have a better climate than this.'

'Shall you be coming again to-morrow ?'

'Yes. I shall be here about the same time.'

'Thank you. Then I will think it over, and speak to you again. I am not sure what I ought to do.'

Helen said good-bye to the two men, and they went away together. Then she turned out of the gate again, and walked down to the sea-shore at Meadfoot. She wanted a few minutes to think it over quietly before seeing Roland. There was no great shock this time. Her heart had been deadened now, and it seemed to her that she had expected the news all along. Every one she loved was struck down ; of course Roland would not be spared. She wondered whether she ought to tell him. It might do him harm, and he was ready to die if any one could be ; and yet she felt he would not like to be left in ignorance. He would probably wish to see his own people as soon as possible. How-

ever, there was no necessity to decide until she had spoken to Dr. Melliss. She walked along the lonely sea-wall. It was a fine day; but the tide was high, and there had been some wind from the south-east. The waves were breaking against the foot of the massive wall, and occasionally a shower of spray flew over the road. The pavement was shining with wet, and strewn with pieces of seaweed. Helen turned at the end of the straight, and walked back again. 'It seems hard that he should have to die so young,' she thought, 'and I shall miss him cruelly. What will it be without him?' But she thought quite calmly now. She could even stop to admire the great waves that smote the Shag Rock, and poured in white foam over its shoulder.

When she came in she found Roland lying with a book in his lap. She had made him promise to lie still now when she came in; and he only smiled at her and held out his hand. She came and took it and stood by him.

'What a colour you have got,' he said.

'Yes; I have been walking along the sea-wall in the wind. The sea is so fine to-day. It is breaking right over the road.'

'I should like to see it. I say, Helen.'

'Yes.'

'I have had two doctors at me to-day. Melliss brought in another, and they were here some time.'

She would not affect ignorance. 'Yes; so I hear,' she said.

'Who told you?'

Helen would have liked to avoid the question, but she could not. 'I met them going away.'

'Did they speak to you?'

'Yes, dear. I caught them at the gate.'

She tried to answer as if nothing unusual had occurred, but she saw that he was not deceived. He looked at her quietly for a second, and then drew her hand up to his lips and kissed it. 'You need not be afraid to tell me,' he said in a steady gentle voice. 'I saw they were keeping back something; and there can be only one thing to keep back. I would rather hear it from you. Nothing that you can say will hurt me. How long do they give me to live?'

Then Helen knelt down and put her arms round him and told him; and he lay silent, caressing the brown head on his shoulder as if her presence gave him more happiness than death could give him pain. Love laughs at death.

Roland would not let his people be troubled. 'Let them be,' he said; 'when I am really dying I will tell them. Why should they be upset when they can do nothing? And I am perfectly happy with you.'

'But is it right, Ro?' Ought you not to tell your mother? She is the one who has a right to be with you.'

'She has other things to do. She could not leave

Wrentham indefinitely ; and I might be an unconscionable time dying, like Charles the Second.'

' You must do what you think best, Ro ; but it seems to me that she ought to know.'

' I think best to be all alone with you, if you don't mind the work and worry.'

' You know I don't mind anything if I can be a little comfort to you.'

' A little comfort ! You have made my last year on earth the happiest of all.'

From this time forward Roland seemed to face the end as calmly as if he had been going on some short voyage. It seemed strange to Helen. He was so young, quite a boy still in some ways, and he had been so enthusiastic about his work. Occasionally he expressed regret at leaving it, but the idea never seemed to trouble him much. The only thing that did seem to trouble him at times was the thought of her future. He was anxious about that ; and he was specially anxious that she should feel as he felt about religion.

Helen saw his anxiety, and did her utmost to relieve it. She had never really lost hold on her faith, and his example and his eager desire acted strongly upon her. To please him she forced herself to read and pray, and tried to be less cold and careless. It was not that she was playing a part, or trying to make her will overcome her reason. The belief was there still, at the bottom of her heart. It had been overlaid by a feeling of soreness but it was there, and

always had been. He was not asking her to believe for his sake ; it was rather as if he were asking her to forgive, not to nourish resentment. If he had asked her to forgive a man or a woman who had treated her cruelly she would have listened to him. She listened to him now, when he asked her to remove from her heart any bitterness against his God. And the moment that she came and opened her heart and tried, the bitterness was gone like an evil dream. Roland had bought by his death what he would have died many times to buy. The woman for whose soul he would have sacrificed his own was 'reconciled to God.' From that time, though she still had her hours of depression and reserve, her religion was again a living power and comfort, and the knowledge of it made Roland perfectly happy.

As the spring turned into summer Roland grew weaker. The warm moist air of the west coast seemed to make him languid, and he grew rapidly worse. Then he decided to tell his mother. For some time past he had written to her as if a fatal issue were possible, and had made her understand that he was forbidden to leave Torquay. Helen had persuaded him to do this much. Now he wrote telling the truth plainly.

The day after he had done so Helen was sitting by the side of his couch. They had been talking about Lady Mary, and the possibility of her coming down ; and from that Helen's thoughts had wandered away to other matters. She had been silent for some time.

Her hands were crossed upon her knees, and her eyes were gazing into the past. Roland looked at her, and put a thin white hand on hers. ‘What are you thinking of so very solemnly?’

‘I was thinking of something your mother once said to me.’

‘What was it?’

Helen hesitated. Roland and she had more than once spoken of the interview she had had with Lady Mary before they left Wrentham; but Helen had always avoided repeating Lady Mary’s words about Guy. It was painful to her to do so, and there was no use in it. Yet she had often been haunted by the idea that Guy had repented his love for her. Something now urged her to ascertain whether it was true that he had meant to give her up. She might never have another opportunity of knowing. She answered Roland’s question by another. ‘Will you tell me the whole truth if I ask you something?’

‘Yes.’

‘Well, that day before we left Wrentham, when your mother was vexed with me, she said something that has often made me miserable since. She said that when Guy came home from India he had begun to repent having cared for me, and that when he went back he had made up his mind to give me up. I think she meant me to understand that he cared for some one else. She said that he changed his mind again only out of pity for me, because he found me

in trouble ; and that I had taken advantage of his generosity. Was it true that he was tired of me ? I never knew it, or had the least suspicion of it. If I had known I would never have married him. It was I who made him go home, Ro, and he was quite free ; but the moment I saw him, before I was in trouble, he spoke to me just as he used to do. How could I guess there was any change, if there was any ?'

Roland looked pained. ' Of course you could not know. I am very sorry my mother said that.'

' Was it true, Ro ? '

' I don't believe he ever repented being engaged to you. He told me about it all, and spoke of you as warmly as any one could have spoken, and the night he got back to Syntia and saw you he wrote to me that he could never give you up.'

' Then what did your mother mean by hinting that he cared for some one else before he went ? Did you ever hear that ? '

' Well, I don't know exactly what happened. I was not there. But my mother had set her heart on Guy's marrying Clara Schneider, whom you met at Wrentham ; and I fancy she did her best to bring it about.'

' Did your mother ever tell you that Guy cared for Miss Schneider ? He had a perfect right to care for her. He was not engaged to me.'

' She did say so ; but I always thought there was some mistake.'

Helen sat silent. Was it true? she wondered. Had Guy come out prepared to give her up and half engaged to another? A vague sense of distrust came over her, not for the first time; then she forced it down resolutely. She thought of his face when he got out of the train, and of his loving letters, and of all he had been to her. 'What a wretch I am,' she said to herself. 'He had a perfect right to do as he pleased; and if he did only marry me from generosity it was all the more unselfish and noble. But I don't believe it. He did love me, both before and after; I know he did. And yet——' She sighed wearily. What was the good of thinking about it? What did it matter now? She raised her eyes and found Roland looking at her with an expression of pity.

'Don't fret about it,' he said. 'Whatever happened then, you had all his love afterwards.'

So he doubted too!

Then the subject dropped, and they began talking about other matters. After a time Roland said something about his will. He told her where to find it, and added: 'I have not much to leave, you know; but I like to think it will add a little to your comfort when I am gone.'

'Oh don't,' she said. 'Please, Ro, don't leave anything to me. It is not right; and I have as much as I want. Indeed I have. Let it go to your sisters. Please do what I ask you. I shall be so much happier.'

But he would not listen to her. 'They will have plenty now,' he said, and refused to make any change; and she had to give in at last.

'Very well, dear. You shall do as you please. But I have as much as I want, and I hope I shall not want anything long.'

'Don't say that. It is not right. I don't like you to say anything the least bit unworthy of you. I want you to be always brave and patient, as you really are at heart.'

'Do you ever think, Ro, what life will be to me without you? I shall not have one living thing that I care for but Pow and Rex.'

'You don't know what may be in store. You are young yet, and may have a long life before you. I want you to try to be happy. I believe you can if you try. You do so much to make others happy that you will find happiness yourself, I am sure. Don't refuse it if it comes to you. Don't be morbid. Remember that was one of the last things I said to you. For my sake accept happiness if it comes to you and thank God for it.' It was in reality one of the last things he said to her. He lived for some weeks longer; but at the end he was generally unconscious from weakness, and it was not often that he spoke clearly.

Lady Mary came down when she got his letter, and she and Helen had to meet. They met with less difficulty than Helen had expected. Lady Mary had

resented Roland's going to her ; but in the presence of death such feelings were stilled. Moreover, Roland spoke very earnestly to his mother about it, and Lady Mary could see that Helen had devoted herself to him. She found her daughter-in-law as gentle and respectful to her as if nothing had ever come between them ; and though there was no real cordiality there was no friction. After a fortnight Lady Mary returned to Wrentham, leaving Roland in Helen's hands. She had a nurse to help her now ; she managed everything admirably, and Lady Mary felt that there was nothing more to be done. Evelyn was eager to go to him, but Lady Mary would not allow it.

When Roland was sinking Helen telegraphed to Wrentham, and they all came down except Harry, who was believed to be in America.

Roland died quietly one morning in the early autumn, a few days after they arrived. He had been lying unconscious all night. As the day broke his eyes opened and he looked for Helen. She had relieved the nurse an hour before, and was sitting near his bed. As she bent down over him a smile came into his face, and his eyes closed ; a faint sigh, and all was over. He was buried in Torquay by his own desire, and a day or two afterwards his people went back to Wrentham.

Before they started Lady Mary spoke to Helen not unkindly. She thanked her for her care of

Roland, and asked her what she was going to do.

'I don't know,' Helen said; 'I shall probably stay here a few weeks longer, perhaps over the winter.'

'Mr. Langley is very anxious that you should come back to us at Wrentham. If you would care to do so it would be a great pleasure to him, and—I think you would not find me very difficult to get on with.'

'Thank you,' Helen said. 'It is very good of you to think of it, and I am really grateful to you, but I could not leave Torquay just now.'

'You must do as you please, but if you will come we will do our best to make you happy.'

Helen shook her head: 'Please do not think I wish to be unkind, but it would be useless. You once said things to me that can never be unsaid. I could not. I know it is all the kinder of you, thinking of me as you do; but I could not go back to Wrentham.'

Then Lady Mary felt she was free from all obligations. It had really been an honest attempt to do her duty. Her debt was paid off now, and her slumbering dislike revived.

CHAPTER XLIV

AN OLD FRIEND

AFTER Roland's death Helen remained in Torquay. She had some thoughts of going away to find work, but she did not know where to go ; and after all, though she did not much care for the place, she had Power. A friend like that was worth keeping. The dear old woman took just as much care of her as if they had been in their old relation to each other, and Helen felt that she could not afford to throw away the only real affection that was left to her. She had a few acquaintances too, whom she liked well enough. So she stayed on at Burnbraes, employing herself as best she could, and getting through life somehow.

In one way or another she found a number of her poorer neighbours to whom, without preaching or patronising, she could do some good. She had always had the power of attracting and managing children ; and as she went about her self-imposed tasks the sight of her graceful black-robed figure, with Rex in attendance, soon came to be the signal for a rush of small welcoming faces. Many a sick child learnt to

bless the beautiful lady with the white hands and the dainty dress who came with books and toys and gentle words to help them through their troubles. Many a hard-worked mother blessed her too. She had not very much money to give, but she had time and sympathy, and she carried about with her the indescribable charm which makes the smallest service welcome.

Helen was reading systematically now, and thinking over what she read. The taste grew upon her, and books which would have been dry and hard to her a year or two before became easy and interesting. She was laying up a priceless treasure for herself.

She went out very little. The crowded afternoon tea-parties, which seemed to be the main dissipation of the place, were not attractive to her; and though many people were ready to be civil and pleasant to the pretty young widow, she was not in the humour as yet to mix much in society. A woman by herself is at a painful disadvantage unless she is prepared to accept attentions which may become embarrassing, and Helen shrank from the ordeal.

It was a very quiet monotonous life; but it was not altogether without its pleasures, and it had its influence upon Helen's mind and heart. At seven-and-twenty she was a well-read thoughtful woman. Her character and her enthusiasms had become chastened and regulated. She was more patient,

more temperate in her judgments, less crude in her modes of thought.

In the spring of 1883 Hugh Dale came to England. Helen had followed with interest the progress of the war in Egypt the autumn before, and had seen that he had been selected for a staff-appointment with the force. Since she left India she had received several letters from him, well-written, rather clever letters, more elegant than his spoken language, but just as warm and straightforward. She was glad to know that he had got a chance now; and she was doubly glad when she read an account of a cavalry skirmish in which he had distinguished himself. He was said to have behaved with splendid coolness and courage in a hand-to-hand fight with some of the enemy's horsemen. She did not see his name again, and she was thinking of no one less when one morning, months afterwards, as she was walking down with Rex to the sea, she heard a familiar voice call out, 'Mrs. Langley,' and looking up she saw him walking out of a gateway close to her. 'I am so glad I have met you,' he said. 'I was looking for your house, and could not find it. I thought you would excuse my calling at Indian hours. I have come down from town on purpose to see you, and have to go off again to-morrow morning.'

Helen was looking at him with a delighted welcome in her eyes. It was very pleasant to see his honest face again. He was looking well, brown and

strong. He had grown quite a respectable moustache, and he was broader and thicker set ; but the eyes were just the same, and his white teeth showed in his old bright smile. ‘Oh, it *is* so nice to see you again !’ she said. ‘Come back with me and tell me all about yourself.’

‘You were going out, weren’t you ?’

‘Only down to the beach for a walk with Rex.’

‘Dear old Rex ! You see he knows me quite well. Let us go on. It’s such a jolly day, and I shall enjoy it awfully.’

They walked down to the quiet beach and found a sunny sheltered spot and sat down.

‘First tell me about that fight where you distinguished yourself so much,’ Helen said. ‘I felt quite proud when I read the account of it.’

‘Oh, did you see that ? It wasn’t anything wonderful really ; only I had to carry some orders for the General, and some of the enemy’s cavalry tried to cut me off. I rode hard to scrape past them, but I could not quite do it, and two of them got in my way, so I had to go at them. I was riding Sultan, and he behaved splendidly, and I managed to do for them both, and get clear before the others came up. Once I was off they could not touch me,—you know how he could gallop—so they soon gave it up, and took to shooting at me. That was all. It was Sultan who pulled me through. He behaved like an angel, dodging in and out as if he understood the whole game.’

‘I did not know angels did that. What have you done with him?’

‘Dead, I am sorry to say. He was shot through the neck at Tel-el-Kebir, and died almost directly.’

‘Ah, my poor old horse! Are you sure he was not left in pain?’

‘No, he was dead before I left him.’

‘Poor Sultan! I am glad he died a soldier’s death.’

They sat on talking, and after some time Chimp said: ‘Do you know, I am a major now? They have given me a brevet.’

He laughed aloud as he told her, a merry boyish laugh, throwing as he spoke a pebble out into the water with a sharp overhand motion of the wrist. She laughed too. He had brought the colour to her cheeks and the brightness to her eyes.

‘Fancy you a field-officer,’ she said, in her old patronising way. ‘Why, you’re only a boy now.’

He threw another stone, which flopped into the sea with hardly a sound. ‘By Jove, I wish I was! Do you know how old I am?’

‘Yes, I think I do; but you’re a boy still, and you ought to be very glad of it.’

‘So I am; but I have got ten years’ service now, and I am getting on for thirty, worse luck. Do you know, I am older than you are, Mrs. Langley?’ he said gravely. Helen laughed again.

‘No? Are you really? What a terrible age to

come to.' Then the laugh died out of her face and she sighed. 'Ah well, some people live faster than others! I feel centuries old.' She drove away the thought, and went on to ask him about the Thirtieth and Syntia; and he told her all sorts of things that stirred her interest. The Aylmers, she knew, were coming home on leave next year.

'You heard of Denham's death?'

'No, is he dead?'

'Yes. It was awfully sad. You remember how he hated the men; used always to say they were drunken brutes, and all that; and how you told him once that he ought to be ashamed of himself, and that he had no right to be in the service if he thought like that? I remember just as if it were yesterday. You were quite—cross.'

Helen nodded.

'Well, there was some cholera in the regiment last year, and you can't imagine how well he behaved. He did everything he could for them,—used to go and see them, and all that. And one of them, when he was very bad, cursed him, and told him to go, and said they all hated him and hoped he would catch it himself and die. Then he did get it himself, and went out in a few hours. I felt an awful beast for having hated him so, and it seemed very sad altogether. He had not got a friend in the regiment.'

'Poor fellow! I wish I had known him better.'

'I wish you had. You might have found a soft

spot in him. He used to go and ask Mrs. Aylmer about you. She told me so.'

The Pink 'un was getting on like a house on fire. 'He wrote a book or something,' Chimp said, 'and got tremendously patted on the head. He has come back to Syntia now, and has turned out no end of a sportsman. He is always shooting tigers, and he comes out pig-sticking, and rides like the—tremendously hard.'

'Like the what?' Helen said, with a laugh in her eyes, born of the recollection of an old Indian sporting-song she had found one day among her father's treasures.

Chimp laughed too. 'That's not fair, Mrs. Langley.'

'Isn't it? Very well, I won't ask any more questions. Go on.'

Chimp went on until lunch-time, throwing innumerable stones, and talking cheerily; and she sat enjoying it all, brighter than she had been for years. The air was delicious, though it was early in February, and the sun was warm, and the blue waves were dancing round the Shag and the Thatcher, and there was a soft haze about Berry Head and out to seaward. At last she sighed and got up. 'Now you must come in to lunch,' she said. 'I don't know whether there will be much for you to eat, but you won't mind for once. I daresay you got accustomed to being starved in Egypt.'

‘No, I didn’t; I lived like a fighting cock; but I don’t want much now.’

Of course the unfailing Pow found them plenty to eat; and she came and waited on them, and took a great fancy to Chimp.

After lunch Helen asked him whether he really meant to give her the whole day; and when he had made quite sure that she wished him to stay, he stayed. They went out for a long ramble together round by the cliffs to Anstis Cove, and then on to Babbicombe. Though it was afternoon the spring feeling was still in the air. They talked of all they had in common; and then, on the breezy cliffs, with the sea shining below them, Helen told him all about her child’s death. It was a sad story, but she could talk of it calmly now; she was surprised to find how calmly. The wound was there still, and would be there all her life; but it was healing over. Chimp seemed the more moved of the two.

‘I am so sorry for you,’ he said, with a break in his voice; ‘I wish I could do anything to make your life less lonely.’

She told him about Roland too, and Chimp was very full of sympathy. ‘He must have been a real good chap. What hard luck his dying like that! Did you like the others?’

‘He was the one I really cared for,’ Helen said. ‘Mr. Langley was very good to me too, but I never saw very much of him, or the others.’

'I am going to Wrentham,' Chimp said, 'some time this year. I stayed there a few days once before I went to India, and they have asked me to come again.'

They came home, and Chimp went off to his hotel for a time, promising to return to dinner. When he came he brought with him a packet containing one of Sultan's little dark round hoofs polished and set in silver. On the top was an inscription: 'Sultan, killed at Tel-el-Kebir, September 1882.' He gave Helen also a piece of hair from the old horse's forelock. 'You remember what a broad head he had, and how the hair used to hang down in front and part in the middle. I thought you would like to have these to remind you of him. I have kept the same for myself.'

Rex stood looking on gravely as if he understood, and then he came and pushed his head under Chimp's hand.

They had dinner together. Afterwards Helen insisted on Chimp smoking his cigarette. Then at last he said good-bye and went away and left her.

She was happier that night than she had been for a long time. How good and honest and true he was. How kind of him to come all the way down from London to see her. Within a few hundred yards of her there had been living for months Sir George Eustace and his wife, rather smart people who had a house in Torquay. They had done the Indian tour

some years before, and had stayed twice in her father's house,—once for a day or two, when they were sent by a great man, and again for a fortnight, when they invited themselves. Helen had done her best to entertain them, at some trouble and expense. Now they avoided calling on her, though they had met her at an evening party and had been surprised into recognition. That was not Chimp's way. It was pleasant to feel one had such friends in the world, even if one did not often see them.

CHAPTER XLV

A CHANCE MEETING

AFTER Chimp had gone away Helen settled down to her quiet life again. He had done her good. In the sunshine of his honest face she had thrown open some of the closed places of her heart, and they had been filled for a time at least with warmth and light. She wished he would come back, as he hoped to do, and she felt happier and more content. A week or two went by, and though it was still February the early western spring was coming on apace. The garden was bright with crocuses and daffodils and violets, and there were some primroses on the banks. On a chestnut tree near the house the brown buds glistened in the sun. The sky was clear and blue, and the air was delightful to breathe. It was the scented air of spring, full of life and joy. Will the air always feel like that, will it be an eternal spring, when we wake from the winter of death?

One lovely morning Helen took a book and walked out towards the sea-shore. The wind was from the north-east, and she knew a place where she would be

perfectly sheltered from it. She went to the cliff above Meadfoot, where she was generally free from interruption, and removed a hairy brown-headed caterpillar from her favourite seat in the midst of some flowering gorse, and settled herself comfortably with a rug over her knees and her book in her lap. Somehow she did not feel much inclined to read, and as she was not pressed for time she sat back and let herself enjoy her idleness. One of the priceless lessons Aunt Madge had taught her was that a few hours spent in doing nothing, with God's glorious nature around her, need not necessarily be harmful. One must have time to see, Miss Treveryan used to say, and time to think.

It was very beautiful. Overhead a few broken white clouds were sailing across the blue sky. The sun was deliciously warm. In front, to the south, perhaps two hundred feet below, lay the waters of Tor Bay. The town and the bottom of the bay were to the right, hidden by a bold projecting headland. From behind it, five miles or more away, the shore swept out eastwards, towards the open sea, in a straight blue line which ended with the clear-cut rocky point of Berry Head. The line was broken just opposite by the town and harbour of Brixham. The sun touched some of the Brixham roofs; and the gray smoke lay in the gap above them, showing the outline of the hills upon which the town was built, and separating them from the blue folds of land beyond. In the harbour mouth Helen could see the dark hulls of

some trawlers at anchor. The horizon to seaward, to the left, was white and hazy, and the parting of sea and sky was almost lost. High above it was a bank of rounded clouds, whose summits stood out bright and clear against the blue. To the extreme left was the point of cliff which protected the bay from the northward, and seemingly close by it the great gray masses of the Thatcher and Orestone Rocks rose out of the water. There was more wind down below than in the upper sky. It came from behind the point to the left, and Helen could see the breakers and the spirts of foam about the flat Orestone. From there to the bold sides of the Thatcher, and beyond it into the mouth of the bay, the lines of white horses were racing merrily in the sunlight. Even across the bay under Berry Head, which caught the full force of the wind, Helen could see the foam flashing up at times, as a big wave burst on the rocks. Out to sea the water was bright green with purple shadows of cloud. In the bay it was blue. The sunlight lay in a broad luminous track right across the bay, from the southern shore to the rocky beach under Helen's feet. The nearer part of the track was broken and stirred, particularly about the edges, by the motion of the waves. From the middle of it stood out the squat triangular Shag Rock, very solid and black.

Helen sat dreamily enjoying it all, watching the occasional signs of life which came to stir the picture. First she saw the short white smoke of a train come

out from behind the headland on the right and run along the blue coast-line close by the sea. It disappeared for a time, and then came out again, and circled round in front of her towards Brixham, and stopped. After that two of the black colony on the Shag Rock flew down to the water. They skimmed along the surface for some distance, and dropped one after another nearly opposite to where Helen was sitting. She watched them diving, and tried to guess where they would come up again, and always failed. Then a small cutter with white sails came across from the direction of Berry Head. She had a good breeze, and was lying over so that the slope of her sails was just the same as the slope of the rocky point. The little vessel stood on until she was within a quarter of a mile or so of the beach ; then she came up into the wind, and her sails shivered in the sunlight, and she went plunging gallantly out to sea. Helen saw the black hull now high out of water, now disappearing in a flash of white foam, as she buried her bowsprit in a wave.

‘I wish I was on board,’ Helen thought, with a recollection of her young days ; ‘but they seem to be getting very wet.’

The white sail went on past the Thatcher, and out to the open sea, until she seemed to be dancing on the shoulder of the great gray rock, and then she was hidden behind it. The shags had flown away now ; but a big white gull, with black tips to its wings,

came round the point to the left, and remained for a minute or two high above the water, swinging up and down; then it dropped and vanished.

After that Helen heard the trot of horses on the road below, between the cliff and the sea, and a carriage went by. As she was looking at it a little girl of seven or eight ran out on to the rocky beach, followed by a small rough-haired dog, and at some distance by a nurse. Helen could hear the child's shrill laughter, and the sharp bark of the dog. 'You dear little scamp,' she said to herself, 'you will get caught if you don't take care;' and as she spoke a wave came in, and there was a stampede. The dog escaped to a safe place, and turned round barking furiously; but the child slipped on a bit of rock and nearly fell, and was overtaken. Helen saw the foam come round her little hurrying legs; and as it went back the nurse swooped down and seized her and dragged her away. 'Poor darling,' Helen thought, 'now you will have a bad time of it.' A minute later two boys scrambled up the sloping cliff, and stopped not far from where Helen was sitting. She had made acquaintance with them before, but they did not see her. The smaller of them said to the other: 'I say, I bet you can't shy a stone into the water from here.'

'Rot! I bet you I can.'

'Well, let's see you.'

Helen called out to them, 'Take care, you bad boys. There are some people somewhere just below.'

They turned round, and the elder of them said, 'Halloo, I didn't see you were there.' Then they came up and had a talk with her. They had got a whole holiday, and had been out fishing in the early morning; but it was too rough, and they were not doing anything particular now.

'Well, don't throw stones down there without looking, because you might hurt some one.'

'Yes, I know; it's beastly dangerous,' the elder boy said. 'Thanks awfully for reminding me. I did shy a stone from near here once, and hit an old chap in the road, and there was an awful row.'

'I don't wonder. What happened?'

'Well, there was another chap with him, and he came up after me, and I saw the other old chap sitting down with his hands up to his head, and I got in rather a funk, and thought I'd better cut.'

'Oh, you little coward! Did he catch you?'

'No; but he knew who I was, and he went and sneaked to my father, and my father got in a tremendous wax. He said I'd jolly near killed him.'

'I daresay you did, if you hit the poor old gentleman on the head.'

'Yes, I expect I did; but I didn't mean to, a bit; and you can't always tell just where a stone is going to drop when you've shied it, can you?'

'No, I suppose not. The best way is not to shy it unless you're sure there is no one about.'

'Yes, of course. Only old chaps like that get into

such rum places sometimes, and they never look out a bit. It's rather bad luck to say it's all our fault for not looking out, when they don't look out themselves. But he was an awful nice old chap all the same. I met him on the road one day, and he knew me, and said something ; and I said I was very sorry I hurt him ; and he said it didn't matter, and gave me ten bob. So I was rather glad I did it after all. At least, I was awfully sorry I hurt him, of course, because he was such a jolly old chap, but I was glad for myself.'

Helen appreciated the distinction, and said so. After a few more words the boys went off, and there was silence again, but for the sound of the waves on the shore below.

On the hill to the left, above the point, they were harrowing a steep sloping field. The earth was a very rich red, and the gray horses showed out clearly against it. Beyond was the bright green sea. Helen's eyes passed from one to the other with a keen appreciation of the warm Devonshire colouring, and then her thoughts went wandering far away. In the offing she could see a large steamer going down channel. Was it going out to India ? she wondered. Oh, if she could go with it, and have those dear happy Syntia days again. How short they were ! She began thinking of that bygone time, and all the quiet pleasantness of her life with her father,—the rides on Sultan, and the cheery evenings at the tennis-ground,

and the merry friendly dinners, and the moonlight picnics, and the dances at the Mess, and the happy Sundays. How bright and delightful it was! Suddenly Rex raised his head with a look of attention. Some one was coming along the path.

A few seconds later two gentlemen turned the corner. There was hardly room for them abreast; and the one in front, a tall strongly-built man, was talking over his shoulder to the other. ‘Don’t believe that cant,’ he said in a deep powerful voice; ‘no other nation on earth could have done what we have done in India; and we ought to be proud of it, instead of trying to be ashamed. We have established our rule over two hundred and fifty millions of men, thousands of miles away from England, and are ruling them justly and well. It is the biggest thing a nation has ever done.’

The tone and something in the sentiment struck Helen as familiar, and she looked at the speaker and knew him at once. ‘Major Russell,’ she thought. ‘How curious! I suppose he would not remember me.’ She was sorry to think it; any one she had met in India seemed like a friend to her. But he did remember. As he came near he looked at her, and she could see the recognition come into his eyes. He lifted his hat doubtfully, and then stopped. As he did so, Helen got up, and he saw he was right. ‘Mrs. Langley?’ he said. ‘I thought I could not be mistaken. Are you living here?’

She told him, and they stood for a minute or two talking. His friend had walked on. Russell said his father and mother had taken a house in Torquay for the winter, and he had some leave and had come to spend it with them. 'I hope you will let my mother come and see you?' he asked.

She had become shy of meeting strangers, but there was something very reassuring about Russell's manner. His dark grave eyes were as soft as a woman's now. He was thinking of Helen as he had known her in Simla, a happy bride with everything bright before her. Now there was the lonely grave in the Afghan snow, and a sad solitary woman in widow's weeds. His deep voice was tender with pity.

'If his mother is like him I shall not be afraid of her,' Helen thought. She said she would be very glad; and, after asking her address, he shook hands and went off to rejoin his friend.

Helen sat down again, and Rex, who had been standing watchfully by her all the time, put his head in her lap. 'Well, my king,' she said, 'what is it? You will always take great care of me, but you wish I would not talk to strangers? Thank you, dear; but I don't think he would hurt me. I think he is rather like you, big and strong and gentle.'

Gradually her thoughts drifted away again to other days and other scenes. She sat with her hand on Rex's head, gazing out over the sea; but instead of it there rose before her eyes the pine-clad mountains,

with their rugged peaks and swirling clouds and glorious sunsets. She felt again the keen breeze from the snowy range, and watched the golden-headed eagles wheeling over the deep blue ravines. At last she sighed and roused herself. How low and smooth and round everything seemed here. The houses were nearly as big as the hills; and the sky-line was so close that you could almost touch it everywhere. *There* the houses dotted about the precipitous mountain sides looked like carved toy chalets; and you could see the plains fifty miles below you to the southward, and the white peaks cutting into the sky fifty miles away to the north. It was all very beautiful; yet it was not England.

CHAPTER XLVI

THE RUSSELLS

NEXT day Mrs. Russell walked over alone, and Helen fell in love with her then and there. She was one of those old ladies who make one feel that age can be really beautiful. Her complexion was almost as perfect as ever, and her eyes as clear as a child's. They were like her son's, large and dark and steady ; but they had a singularly gentle and winning expression. Her thick silver hair was brushed into curls on each side of a smooth broad forehead. Something in her way of speaking and in her upright carriage reminded Helen of Miss Treveryan. It was a very sweet face and manner, and it was the face and manner of a gentlewoman born and bred. Helen felt at once that she could trust Mrs. Russell ; and when they had been ten minutes together they were on the best of terms. The liking was evidently mutual.

Before long Mrs. Russell said something about the difference between Devonshire and Cornwall.

‘Do you know Cornwall well ?’ Helen asked.

‘No, I don’t, but my mother’s people were Cornish ;

and after my husband left the navy we went down to see the county, and he took a fancy to it. Then we happened to see a house to let that just suited us, and so we made up our minds to stay.'

'Do you live there now?'

'Yes, in the summer. We find it rather wet and rough in winter, so we have come here. We are to be turned out of our house after this year, and I don't know where we shall go then.'

'I come from Cornwall too,' Helen said; 'I wonder whether I know your part of it.'

'Our house is not far from Falmouth, on the water.'

'I know Falmouth. We did not live very near it, but I have been there to see people when I was a girl. We lived in a place you would not have heard of, I am afraid,—St. Erroc. It's some way down the coast.'

'Oh yes, I have heard of St. Erroc,' Mrs. Russell said. 'One of my aunts married a Treveryan of St. Erroc.'

It was curious. They found out that the Treveryan in question was a grand-uncle of Helen's, her grandfather's only brother who had been drowned many years before while serving in the navy. They agreed that they were very glad indeed, and it helped to draw them together. 'I hope you will let us see something of you now that we have found each other out,' the old lady said as she was going away. 'I am

afraid,' she added, with a slight hesitation in her manner, 'it must be a lonely life for you, my dear. Try not to think of me as quite a stranger,' and she looked at Helen for a moment with a tender pity in her eyes, and bent forward and kissed her.

Helen sat thinking over it after she had gone. What a beautiful old face it was; one that could look very firm, she felt sure, but so gentle and good and true. You could trust those eyes without the slightest reserve. How strange it was that they should have met, and how pleasant. Helen knew that she had found another friend that day, not a mere acquaintance.

And Mrs. Russell went away with her heart full of warmth and pity. 'What a sweet-looking girl,' she thought, 'and very young to be left alone in the world. I knew she was a lady directly I saw her. One can always tell. I am glad we are connected.'

For some weeks after that Helen saw the Russells very often. Admiral Russell was there when she first called, and he received her, and made himself perfectly delightful. He was a strong sailor-like old man, not nearly so tall as his son, but powerfully made, and in no way broken. It was a thoroughly green old age. 'Come in,' he said, walking out of the door to meet her, and shaking hands with outspoken admiration in his face. 'I have been longing to see you ever since my wife made your acquaintance. She could talk of nothing but her new cousin when she came back.'

'I am afraid I can hardly claim to be a cousin,' Helen said. 'I wish I could.'

'Oh, we're not going to let you cry off. You will have to accept us; Cornish cousins, you know, Cornish cousins.' And cousins they were thenceforward. No one could have been kinder and more cordial than the two old people were. They got Helen to come over to dinner with them when they were alone, and treated her as one of themselves; and they made her go out driving with them; and they strolled in to Burnbraes and 'looked her up,' as the Admiral used to say, at all sorts of odd times. At the end of a month, when they began to get ready for their move to Cornwall, Helen felt as if she had known them for years.

She liked Colonel Russell too. He was more reserved in his manner than his father and mother, but he was always courteous and kind. There was just the mixture of strength and gentleness about him which is attractive to a womanly woman. In repose his face was grave, almost stern, and the effect of it was increased by the great size of his frame. One could not help being struck and impressed by the massive head, and the broad chest and shoulders, and the unusual length of limb. The whole man was cast in a heroic mould. He looked as if a coat of mail would have suited him better than nineteenth-century broad-cloth. You could imagine him, Helen thought, at Agincourt or Crecy, hewing out a way for the English

flag ; or on some battlefield of the Holy Land, smiting and slaying and scattering the enemies of the Cross. And yet children never seemed afraid of him, though men often were.

Helen and he got on very well. Russell was a man who, with all his deep admiration and respect for women, perhaps because of those feelings, was generally silent in women's society. He was wanting in the current coin of conversation, and felt himself at a disadvantage ; but with Helen he was at his ease. She did not want him to flirt or flatter ; and she had read and thought and suffered. He liked her unaffected ways and straightforward speech, and he saw that she really sympathised in his vehement love for his profession and his country ; then her musical tastes were a keen pleasure to him. Though he neither played nor sang himself, he had inherited from his mother a deep feeling for music, and he thoroughly appreciated Helen's playing. After a time his mother succeeded in making her sing again. At first she shrank from it, but she did not like to refuse, and when she had once begun it soon became a real delight. She found that her voice had suffered little from her long neglect of it, and Russell was never tired of listening to her.

Shortly before the Russells left for Cornwall they asked Helen to come and spend a week or two with them when they had settled down, and she readily agreed. They had made her feel so thoroughly at

home that the visit seemed to promise unmixed pleasure ; and she also thought that she might find an opportunity of seeing Laneithin. It would be a sad return ; but she longed to be in St. Erroc again after all these years.

CHAPTER XLVII

MENARVOR

IT was a beautiful evening towards the end of April when Helen found herself at the little Cornish station where she had to get out of the train. It had been a pleasant journey. Though she had not travelled much as a girl, she remembered some parts of the scenery ; and when she had left behind the rich red earth and soft rolling lines of Devon, and was in Cornwall again, it all came back to her. How friendly and familiar the country seemed ; the deep valleys with their streams and their close-growing oak woods, and the bare gray hills of the mining districts, and the plain granite houses, and the far-away out-of-the-world look of everything.

Helen knew that the Russells lived some miles from the railway ; but on the platform was the old Admiral looking out for her ; and he got Rex out of his prison, and carried Helen off to a well-appointed phaeton that was waiting in the road, and they drove away together.

The evening was clear and warm, and she thoroughly

enjoyed her drive. Around her in all directions the country was blazing with gorse. There were great golden hedges entirely made of it, and it bordered the roads and lay in broad patches of gold wherever there was a piece of waste land. Under the loose untrimmed hedgerows, and upon the grassy banks, the primroses were growing in countless numbers. There were violets too, and their scent mingled with the delicate fragrance of the primroses and the gorse, and made the whole air sweet. The trees perhaps were more backward than in Devonshire. The may was only beginning to thicken, and the oaks still held back ; but the beeches and limes were covered with fresh young green, the light spring green that is even more beautiful than the full glory of summer. Here and there, standing out boldly from the brightness around it, was the dark mass of a pine clump. And the black-birds whistled slowly in the branches overhead, and the air was full of life and hope and joy.

It was a long drive, and when they reached Menarvor the darkness was falling ; but Helen could see that there was a broad sloping lawn below the house, with some trees at the end, and some water beyond them. ‘Is that the sea ?’ she said.

‘ Yes. At least it’s salt water. The open sea is three or four miles away. I have my boat moored just off the bank there in the summer.’

‘ How delightful ! I long to see it all by daylight.’

Mrs. Russell gave Helen a warm welcome. Colonel Russell was away on business, but hoped to return in a day or two.

It was cool enough by the waterside to make a fire agreeable in the evening, and they sat round it after dinner and chatted. Helen felt strangely happy and at home.

When she went up to her room Pow came to her. The old lady had left the house at Torquay in charge of her sister, and had accompanied Helen as lady's-maid. 'Eh, ma'am,' she said, 'it is a lovely place. Just look out of the window and see.'

Helen laughed at her. 'Why, it's pitch dark, Pow; you can't see anything now.'

'Just look, ma'am,' she said, drawing aside the curtain, and Helen went to the window and looked out. It was very beautiful. From the gravel drive under her feet the lawn sloped gently down to a great Scotch fir, with ivy-covered stem, which stood out dark and clear against the moon. Behind and on both sides of it were some limes and beeches, and the water faintly moved and sparkled through their delicate spring foliage. Here and there the moonlight lay on the sloping grass between the long shadows of the trees, and showed the shrubs which were dotted about it, and darkened by contrast the dark nooks and corners where the lawn ran up to right and left under the pines and chestnuts and holly. Beyond the water Helen could see through the tops of the trees

the dim straight line of the hills on the opposite shore.

She woke early next morning, while the room was still dark. Soon afterwards she heard the birds wake. A blackbird first broke the silence with a few low sleepy notes, and then a thrush began, and soon, as the daylight broadened, the whole choir burst into song. She fell asleep again with the sound in her ears, and when she woke the second time the bright sunlight was showing through the sides and top of the curtains. Helen felt so completely rested, and so full of life, that she could not lie in bed. She got up and dressed, and went out and let Rex loose.

The sky was blue, and a very light easterly breeze just stirred the water and deepened its colour. The air was full of scent. Helen walked down a shady gravel path to the left of the lawn, and found herself by the side of an ivy-covered boat-house, looking out upon a landlocked lake or fiord. Twenty feet below her was the blue water. The tide was almost full, and along the shore to the right, close by, she could see it lapping a line of shelving rock indented by little pebbly bays, and overhung by trees which grew at the top of a precipitous earthen bank. Two or three miles away the masts of some vessels at anchor loomed faintly through the morning mist, and beyond them seemed to be the open sea, which, however, was hidden by a rounded hill with a long projecting point. A flock of gulls were out on the water to the left, some

hovering over it, some floating upon its surface. They looked white in the sunlight.

Helen stood by the boat-house for a few minutes, and then went back into the garden. There was a long grassy walk through the trees which overhung the water, and she strolled down it. The birds were singing all round her; and at her feet, under the bushes that topped the steep bank, and by the mossy roots of the limes and pine trees, the primroses grew in thousands. Among them were violets, and here and there patches of anemones. The brave little celandine had had its day with the March winds and the daffodils, and almost all its burnished golden stars had whitened and disappeared, but a few of them were still to be seen. In a patch of oak wood at the end of the walk, where the hanging boughs touched the sea, the ground was white with anemones, and among them a few blue hyacinths were breaking into flower.

Helen came back through the kitchen garden, and saw the mossy hole of a wren's nest in the wall close by the doorway. A pair of wood-pigeons had built in the big pine at the bottom of the lawn, and there was a blackbird's nest with young birds in it in a thorn bush on the sea-bank, and a thrush sitting upon her eggs in a rhododendron a few yards farther on. The whole of the old-fashioned rambling garden seemed full of birds.

She went back to the house, bearing a great dewy bunch of primroses, anemones and violets. There were

so many that they would not be missed. As she reached the porch, with her hands full of flowers and her eyes bright with spring, a tall square-shouldered figure stepped out into the sunlight to meet her. 'Colonel Russell?' she said in surprise. 'When did you come?'

'I got here half an hour ago. I came down by the night mail and walked over from the station. You are out early.'

'I couldn't stay in bed; it was too perfect a morning. How lovely the place is!'

'I see you have been in the sea-walk,' he said, looking at the flowers.

'Yes. Mrs. Russell won't mind my picking them, will she? They are in thousands. I never saw anything like them. I didn't pick anything in the garden.'

Russell smiled at her tone of apology. 'Pick anything you like,' he said; 'I will answer for my mother. But there is nothing so beautiful as the wild flowers.'

'That is just what I feel. I suppose going away to India makes one feel it more strongly. I remember thinking it so odd when my father came home, and made me pick him bunches of daisies and buttercups. Now I understand. One can admire orchids and things of that kind, but one loves the English flowers.'

'Yes. There is nothing on earth so fresh and sweet as an English spring, but I think I never fully

appreciated it till I had been some years away, "sighing my English breath in foreign clouds."

'Nor did I. It is the same with everything. I never appreciated that play until lately, or any of Shakespeare. Now he comes home to me as no one else does, because he is English as no one else is.'

'I did not know you cared for Shakespeare. But that is what always strikes me about him. He is so English, and so proud of being English. You can see that he really loved his country, the "little body with the mighty heart."

'Yes; how he would have rejoiced if he could have known that we should spread all over the world. And can't you imagine his contempt for the cant and sentimentalism of the philosophic radical, the Perish India school, who would let our empire go to pieces?'

Russell was looking out through the trees on to the blue water. 'That school enrages me,' he said, 'as nothing else does; it is the embodiment of the detestable bourgeois spirit. They like to stay by their firesides and eat buttered toast and criticise others. I wish one could drive them all out to India and America and Australia and Africa, and make them work in building up the empire, and feel, and understand. What would England have been if all Englishmen had been like them? A tenth-rate power or a dependency of France.'

They had to go in to get ready for breakfast, and the conversation dropped; but more than once they

recurred to something of the kind, and they found themselves very much in accord. With both of them the love of their country was a living force.

Helen stayed on with the Russells for some weeks. The primroses were dying away, though you could find them still in the wood with the anemones, and in the mossy nooks where the lawn ran up among the trees. The banks and woods and orchards were blue with hyacinths. A great bed of lilies of the valley burst into blossom, and for a time the house was filled with their silver bells and glistening leaves. The gorse was going with the primroses ; here and there a little new bright blossom was to be seen on the bushes, but in most places the gold was turning to brown. The paler yellow of the broom was beginning to appear where the gorse had blazed. The swallows were skimming over the edges of the blue water, and the earth began to quiver in the sun, and the air was full of the hum of insects. The chestnut blossoms were coming out, and the pink may, and the lilac ; the limes and beeches and sycamores were thickening fast, and even the oaks were green. Once or twice Helen said something about going ; but the old people would not hear of her leaving them until June, when they were going away themselves on a visit. So she stayed on and saw the lilies die away, and the hyacinths grow few, and the columbine cover the sloping orchard where primroses and violets and hyacinths had been.

In the meantime she had found pleasure on the

water as well as on shore. On the first of May the Admiral announced that his boat was ready, and suggested a sail in the afternoon. Helen accepted the proposal very gladly; the sight of the sea, and of the fishing-boats which passed and repassed before her eyes, had filled her with longing.

When they were at lunch the old gentleman, who was sitting with his face to the window, said, 'There she comes. There is the *Swallow*. Doesn't she look beautiful ?'

Helen looked out and saw a little cutter tearing along with all sail set towards the landing-place; her canvas shone very white in the sunlight against the blue water, and she certainly did look as pretty as only a cutter can. She came on until it seemed as if she were going to bury her bowsprit in the bank under the Scotch fir; then her helm went down, and she swept gracefully round to her moorings, and lay still, with her white canvas showing through the trees.

They finished their lunch, and went to get ready. Helen was impatient, and was out first. She was standing on the gravel by the hall door when a young sailor came up and saluted her, with a cheery smile and a nervous shrug of the shoulders. He was a short, strongly-built man of five-and-twenty, with brown hair and a reddish moustache, and cheeks like cherries. His blue jersey and red cap set off his bright complexion. He had a blade of grass in his mouth, and walked with his feet rather wide apart.

‘Morning, miss,’ he said; ‘you don’t remind me,’ and his red cheeks got redder, and he fidgeted a little.

Helen looked at him hard for a moment, and it came back to her with a rush. ‘Not Dick?’ she said; ‘Dick Tregenza? Oh, I *am* glad to see you;’ and Henry Russell came out to find his mother’s guest shaking hands cordially with one of his father’s boatmen. They had a few minutes’ talk together, and Russell was completely ‘out of it.’

‘How is your father? Is he here?’

‘Dead and buried, miss,—dead and buried. He died four or five years ago.’

‘Dead? Oh, I hoped I might have seen him again.’

‘Yes, miss; he used often to talk of you. He died very sudden. He was getting old, ye see, and it was a very cold winter, and the cold struck him like.’

‘I am so sorry. I wish I had seen him again.’

‘And how is your brother Will?’ she asked, after a time.

‘He’s gone too, miss.’

‘Not dead?’

‘Yes, miss; he was lost at sea two years ago, aboard the *Susan* of Fowey. She was a smart craft too,—we did reckon she was the fastest schooner in the Channel—but she went down with all hands. It was very wild weather, and they do say her bulwarks was too high; she got a lump o’ watter aboard, and

couldn't shake it off. That was a bad job, that was,— a bad *wish't* job.'

'Poor Will! Then you're alone now?'

'Yes, miss. I'm in charge of the Admiral's flagship,' he said, with a smile and a blush.

'Fancy you in charge of anything! *What* a naughty little boy you used to be.'

'So I have heered say, miss.'

'Are you really captain of the *Swallow*?'

'Yes, miss; captain and half the crew.'

'I shall tell the Admiral about you; I don't think it's safe.'

Tregenza laughed. 'Don't you, miss? I don't think there is much the matter with me; I reckon I can sail a boat as well as most.' He was quite right. He could not have taken charge of a cruising yacht, but, trained from childhood to a fisherman's life, he was just the man for a small craft like the *Swallow*. There was no smarter boat-sailor on the Cornish coast than Dick Tregenza. Always cool and plucky and good-tempered, always keen, and as active as a kitten, he handled the little cutter as well as she could be handled.

The Admiral came out, and Helen soon found herself on board a pretty little vessel of about ten tons. She was intended chiefly for day work, and had a good-sized well aft, fitted to accommodate six or eight people; but there was also a very fair amount of room below. As they rowed alongside, Helen had

time to admire the *Swallow's* graceful lines, and to wonder a little at the amount of sail she carried.

‘There,’ the old man said when Helen stepped on board; ‘now what do you think of her?’

Helen duly and honestly expressed her admiration. Then she said, ‘What a big mainsail; isn’t it bigger than usual?’

‘Well done, my dear; I see you’re quite a sailor. It is big,—I’m not sure it isn’t a little too big—but look at her beam. She is not built like a cigar, as yachts are nowadays.’ She was not indeed. Her beam was much more than a quarter of her length; it gave her more room below, and enabled her to carry a lot of sail, and made her a fast boat for her size, as well as a remarkably good sea-boat.¹

‘I see,’ Helen said, rather doubtfully.

‘Now, my dear, as you’re such a sailor, do you think you could take her out to sea?’

‘Yes, I think so.’

‘Do you mean it really? Have you ever done it before?’

Helen laughed. ‘Oh yes, when I was a girl. I think I can do it if there are no rocks or sand-banks in the way.’

‘No. It’s all right, isn’t it, Tregenza? There is plenty of water now.’

‘Oh yes, sir, plenty o’ watter for we.’

¹ A few years ago, before the alteration of the measurement rules, a yacht of such dimensions was a curiosity. Happily we are more sensible now.

‘Very well, Mrs. Langley ; now, let us see what you can do. It’s her first cruise this year ; you’ll bring us luck.’

Helen took the helm, and the old man looked on with an expression of amused expectation in his face. It very speedily gave place to one of surprise, and then to one of keen pleasure. He saw Helen settle down to her work with coolness and evident enjoyment. She got some way on the boat, and then sent her along, keeping her just a good full. There was a nice breeze from the south-east, and with her topsail set the *Swallow* fairly raced, lying over until the water spirted through the scuppers, and at times the rail went under. Helen was as happy as a girl, and the old gentleman was delighted. ‘You’re sure you don’t mind it ?’ he said, as he saw the water washing along the little deck. ‘It’s quite safe, you know ; it would take a good deal to upset her.’ Helen laughed merrily. ‘I think it’s perfectly delicious ; I have not enjoyed anything so much for years ;’ and she looked as if she enjoyed it, with the fresh colour in her cheeks, and her eyes sparkling.

They went racing out southward towards the open sea. To east and west were the rocky shores of the inlet, with trees and fields coming down to the rocks. And as the little *Swallow* tore through the blue water, the dark woods and green fields and sharp point of Penarrow seemed to be falling slowly back, and Pendennis, with its gray tower and gorse-covered sides,

came creeping out ahead of them. They flew past the tall side of the *Ganges* training-ship, whose white ensign was fluttering gaily in the breeze, and across the broad mouth of the inner harbour. They left to the westward the rounded fields of Trefusis, and Falmouth clustering on its hills, and the docks and the steamers. They ran close under the ornamented stern of a big Norwegian timber-barque, and across the bows of a queer-looking green vessel which Tregenza pronounced to be 'Eye-talian,' and through the midst of a score of other craft of all rigs and nationalities; and then they were between the gray castles of Pendennis and St. Mawes, and on one bow was the white lighthouse at the point of the wooded hill, and on the other the blue Manacles, miles away, creeping out beyond Pendennis, and right ahead of them the tall beacon on the Black Rock, and the open sea.

'I remember it all now,' Helen said; 'I remember running in under Pendennis, and being very glad indeed to get in, once when we were caught in a westerly gale.'

'I think you had better keep inside the lighthouse now; with this easterly wind there is sure to be some sea. You can make it out now.' It did look a little rough beyond the Black Rock; the waves showed against the sky-line, and were flashing white. 'Do you mind going out?' she said; 'I should like to feel what it is like again.'

‘I don’t mind in the least if you like to go out, but we may get wet.’

‘It won’t hurt me; I have nothing on that will spoil.’

‘Very well, my dear; fire away.’

So Helen kept the little *Swallow* heading for the open sea, and soon, as they got out of shelter of the lighthouse point, her bowsprit began to swing up to the great green waves, and to plunge into the trough beyond, and occasionally a little water came over her bow and went pouring along the deck. Occasionally, too, there was a sharp flap of a wave against her side, and a shower of spray flew over her. The sun was bright, and the wind not too strong; it was a perfect day for sailing.

They went out until they saw the straight blue point of the Dodman to the east, and beyond it the dim line of the coast by Fowey and Looe. To westward were Falmouth Bay and the Manacles, and at last the Black Head opened out.

‘My old home lies away down there,’ Helen said; ‘with this breeze we could be in St. Erroc in a very few hours.’

‘We will go some day if you like; now I really think we ought to go about, or we shall not get in before dark.’

‘The wind have flied round a bit to the south’ard,’ said Tregenza.

Going home was not quite so enjoyable, the long

lift and slide of the following waves instead of the plunge and shock. It was difficult to keep the *Swallow's* head straight; still it was very pleasant. When they got home, after sunset, Helen's cheeks were tingling with spray and wind, and she felt as if she were a girl again. And the birds received them with a jubilant even-song as they walked up under the trees from the little stone pier at the landing-place. It had been a delightful afternoon.

After this Helen often went out with the old gentleman. Sometimes Henry Russell came too; but Mrs. Russell was not fond of the water, and he generally stayed with her and walked or drove. Nevertheless he and Helen saw one another constantly, and under favourable conditions; both were at their ease and perfectly natural. He had always admired her, and he now found himself strongly attracted by her straightforward, unaffected ways. She was perhaps a little afraid of him, for though his manner to her was gentle, he was very uncompromising in his views, and at times he seemed rather cold and reserved; still she liked him, and learned to look up to him. He was a very earnest soldier, and a clever well-read man. Before long Helen began really to value his good opinion.

She remained until May had gone and June was well in. All the spring flowers were over now, but the fields were ablaze with buttercups and ox-eyed daisies; and the tall red foxglove and the little bird's-

foot lined the sides of the lanes, and in the big loose hedges there was the delicate pink of the wild rose, and the bryony was twisting over everything,—over the uncurling bracken, and over the nut bushes, and even over the tall grass stems. The white and the pink may were in full bloom, and the chestnuts. When they went out to sea they saw the fields about Penarrow Point all yellow with charlock. It was an evil weed no doubt, but it was very pretty.

Before June was half over Henry Russell knew that Helen had grown very dear to him. He kept the knowledge to himself with characteristic self-restraint. He was perhaps oftener with her than he used to be, but his manner was certainly no warmer than before. They strolled about the garden together at times, or sat and talked in the drawing-room window on wet afternoons, when the south wind brought up a 'skew' from the sea, and all the landscape was blurred ; but they talked about nothing like love. Russell felt that she was not prepared for that, and he was too proud a man to risk a rebuff. She never for a moment suspected that he cared for her. He seemed perfectly indifferent as to her movements. He was always polite and ready to talk to her as his mother's guest, but it seemed to her that he did not care a straw whether she were present or absent ; and sometimes she fancied that he looked down upon her and her opinions. She saw, or imagined she saw, disapproval in his face, and it hurt her. The only thing

that really seemed to please him was her singing. He never pressed her to sing if she showed the slightest sign of disinclination; but he was evidently fond of music. After a time she had got into the way of singing in the evening almost as a matter of course. The Admiral invariably went to sleep, but both Mrs. Russell and her son enjoyed it heartily, and at times he surprised her with the warmth of his thanks. Otherwise he seemed cold and careless.

The fact was, that Henry Russell was very much in love, and that it made him less easy and pleasant than he used to be. So long as he looked upon Helen only with pity he was gentle and tender and free from self-consciousness, as he would have been with a child. Directly he knew that he loved her, he shrank into himself, and became altogether different in his manner,—natural still at times, but at times cold and proud and reserved.

Meanwhile they had never succeeded in getting to St. Erroc. Two or three times they arranged to start next morning, but something always happened. The first morning they got up to find that the wind had gone round to the south during the night, and it was raining,—a soft persistent rain. This would have spoilt the expedition, so they gave it up. The next time they went slowly out to the lighthouse with a very light northerly breeze; and then the breeze died away, and they were drifting about in a flat calm till it was too late to go on. The third time it was blowing a

gale from the south-west. The windows had begun to rattle during the night and the vane on the roof to groan, and when day broke the clouds were flying overhead and the trees were waving wildly. In the harbour the water was feather-white, and outside, Tregenza informed them, the sea would be 'running like a cliff.' It was very bad luck. 'Never mind, we will do it when you come back,' Mrs. Russell said. They had insisted on her promising to come back later in the year, and she had promised.

CHAPTER XLVIII

ST. ERROC

IT was dreary work returning to Torquay after those pleasant weeks. The little house looked very small and hot and confined. There was no freedom; nothing but 'villa residences' in all directions, and a crowd, and loneliness. Helen's heart was sad as she re-entered her rooms. She tried hard to be cheerful nevertheless. After all, she had her books and her music; and there were the children, who came running about her when she appeared again. Their faces of unfeigned pleasure did her good. And in spite of villas there was always the sea.

Man marks the earth with ruin; his control
Stops with the shore.

Still it was lonely, very lonely. Helen settled down to it again, but it did seem an aimless, useless life. 'I wonder why I am made to go on living,' she said to herself one day as she sat in her old seat, looking out towards Berry Head; 'I do no good to any one. I don't want to live. I have nothing to

live for,—nothing before me—no hope except the hope of a happier life hereafter. I suppose that is the meaning of it all,—to make me realise and long for another life. Well, I must try to be content.'

But the heavy summer air made her weary and languid in spite of her resolves. She thought of Cornwall, its open sea and fresh country, and at times the anticipation of another visit to the Russells gave her pleasure; but after all what was the good of it? It only made her life seem all the darker and sadder when she came back. It was lonely, very lonely. At times she could not read, and even her music failed to bring her comfort. The fact was, though she did not know it, that the desire for action and happiness had come back to her. She was less satisfied to lie still than she had been in the time of her prostration. She was not old enough yet to have learnt the final lesson, to have found the content which comes from resignation to the inevitable, from a proud acceptance of failure, of defeat in the battle of life. 'No,' she said, 'I cannot bear it any longer. I must do something. When I come back from Cornwall I will find work. I am quite strong enough for nursing now. I cannot go on like this.'

She thought over the idea very often during the hot summer months, and made inquiries. It was a rough life apparently, but she cared nothing for that. Power was horrified. A Treveryan to become a hospital nurse! Miss Helen, with her dainty ways

and her beautiful face and her white hands, to live in a ghastly sick ward, in daily contact with disease and death ! ‘ Oh no, ma’am, don’t talk of it,’ she said ; ‘ that kind of work is not fit for you. It is very good for people like Mrs. Pratt, who came when Mr. Roland was ill. It is no work for you.’

‘ Do you think so, Pow ? Which do you suppose he liked best to have about him ? ’

‘ Oh, he was so fond of you, ma’am ; and besides he was a gentleman. You would be nursing all sorts of rough people,—common soldiers very likely.’

‘ Common soldiers, Pow ?—the men who give their lives for us all over the world ! Aren’t they worth a little care and gentleness ? ’

Pow shook her white head. ‘ Oh, ma’am, you don’t understand.’

‘ Yes, Pow, I do understand. You’re a dear old thing, and you think I ought to be rich and happy and idle, and never do anything for anybody, and have everybody do everything for me ; but I don’t agree with you, and I am going to work if I can get work.’

Pow was not convinced, but she said no more ; she only thought in her faithful old heart, ‘ Oh, I wish she would take a liking to that nice gentleman down in Cornwall.’ Pow was a matchmaker like other women.

Helen walked out to the beach with Rex, and sat down. She read for a time, and then unconsciously she put her book on her lap, and began thinking of

her future work again, and of what Power had said. She was roused from her day-dream by the sound of voices, and looked up to see a small fair-haired girl talking to Rex, while a nurse stood some distance off calling to her in a voice of alarm. ‘Come away,’ she said, ‘come away directly. He’ll bite you.’

Helen recognised the child she had seen caught by the wave that day in the spring. The little Yorkshire terrier that was always with her was now walking round Rex with its legs very stiff, growling savagely. Helen called out, ‘Don’t be frightened, he is very gentle,’ and walked quickly up to the group. But the child was not frightened in the least. She was stroking Rex’s head with her tiny hand, and evidently quite happy. ‘What’s his name?’ she said, as Helen came up.

‘Rex. He is quite good, and won’t hurt you. •He used to be very fond of a little girl like you, and I daresay he thought he had found her again.’

‘I’m not afraid of him. I think it’s very silly to be afraid of dogs. Paw, Rex.’

Rex sat down and tendered his big paw, and she took it and kissed it. ‘Oh, you darling,’ she said; ‘fancy being afraid of you!’

After that Helen and the child became great friends, and even Jack the terrier grew reconciled to the big rival who never oppressed him. They used often to meet, and walk together. Helen found that Ethel was the daughter of a rich widow, whose health

was too delicate to stand children. She managed to go out a good deal nevertheless, but the girl was educated by a daily governess, and lived with her nurse. How strange it seemed. One child, and a dear brave little mite, who might well have been a mother's idol. 'If she were only mine,' Helen thought, 'how happy I could be! Why are these things?' Even as it was she found some happiness in it. The child grew fond of her, and they helped one another to feel less lonely. When Helen went away again she left behind her one little heart that had been touched and softened by love and gentleness. One can generally find some good to do without putting on a nurse's habit.

August was nearly over when Helen arrived for the second time at Menarvor. It was a sunny warm day, and the journey down had been pleasant enough; but summer was on the wane, and to any one who does not live for hunting or shooting there is always something melancholy in the approach of autumn. It is beautiful, but there is sadness in its beauty.

As Helen drove away with the Admiral, who had come for her again, she could not feel quite as bright as the first time she had passed along that road four months earlier. It was no longer spring. The golden glory of the gorse had vanished, and there were few flowers about the hedgerows. The foxglove blossom had climbed to the top of the long stalk and dis-

appeared, except here and there on the side shoots. There was some honeysuckle and clematis; and the great banks among the pine woods were covered with heath and heather and dwarf gorse. There was some blackberry blossom too, mixed with fruit in all stages, from green to black. But the bryony had turned, and the bracken was turning fast; and the fields that had been green were full of the dull pale yellow of harvest; and the trees, though they were green still, were a heavy green; the brightness had gone out of them. Not a bird was singing. Yet it was pleasant getting back, and Helen talked away cheerily enough as they drove on. When they reached Menarvor they found Mrs. Russell and her son together in the garden; and Helen's welcome was warmer than ever, and there was a delightful sense of being at home again. There was the little *Swallow* lying at her moorings; you could just see her bows and bowsprit through a gap in the trees.

It was an unusually warm evening for Cornwall, and after dinner they went and sat outside on the terrace under the stars. After a time a boat floated past in the darkness below, with some people in her singing. They sang well, and their voices came sweetly across the water. At times there mingled with them the sound of the oars in the rowlocks, as the men rowed a few lazy strokes and rested again. They finished a part-song, and then they struck up a hymn, after the Cornish fashion; and the little party on the terrace

above heard the voices and the sound of the oars grow fainter and fainter until all was still again.

Helen was the first to break the silence. 'It reminds one of the *Tempest*. "The music crept by me upon the waters."

'I think it is a hint to you, Mrs. Langley,' Colonel Russell said.

The Admiral broke in. 'What a selfish fellow you are! She is dead tired. Let her sit still and enjoy her first evening in peace.'

'I'm not tired a bit. I will sing with pleasure. No, you are not to come in, Colonel Russell. I can manage for myself.'

She went up to her room and got out some music, and sang them song after song as they sat by the open window. The Admiral dropped off to sleep as the sweet unstrained voice welled out upon the summer night; but the mother and son sat listening silently. Under the cover of the darkness his strong face was stirred with emotion, and his dark eyes glistened. There was something in her voice that always affected him deeply. A few voices have that peculiar tone which goes straight to one's heart. Once or twice his mother heard him draw his breath with a sharp sound, almost of pain; but she knew, and said nothing. At last Helen closed the piano and came out. Russell got up with a sigh. 'Thank you,' he said. 'It was a shame to let you go on so long, but it is such an intense pleasure.' The Admiral woke as the music

stopped, and shook himself up, and thanked her also; and Mrs. Russell said, 'My dear, your singing does me more good than anything I know.'

Helen woke very early the next morning. She remembered her waking four months ago, and was struck by the contrast. The birds were not singing now, and the morning broke quite silently. She would never again see one of those exquisite spring mornings at Menarvor.

When she had been in Cornwall a week or so, they succeeded at last in carrying out their long-deferred expedition to St. Erroc. It was lovely September weather, and the day before they started had been so beautiful that in the evening Mrs. Russell announced her intention of going too. 'I have always wanted to see St. Erroc,' she said. 'Now I have a double interest in it. If it looks really fine to-morrow, and if the wind is still off shore, I shall go.'

The Admiral was delighted.

'But it is some way from the coast,' Helen said, 'and we shall have to walk.'

'Never mind; I can walk two or three miles as well as any of you, and I want to go. Not that we shall ever get there, in all probability. We never get anywhere when I go. We shall sail a great many miles in every direction but the right one, and end by spending the night at sea in a calm, with steamers rushing about all round us, blowing fog-horns. But I don't care, I will try again.'

The morning was perfect, an ideal September day. The sun was shining brightly, and the few light clouds in the sky were drifting slowly overhead out to sea. The breeze was just what they wanted. It would be a regular soldier's wind both ways, and the water would be smooth. Nothing could be better.

All was ready by half-past seven, and when Mrs. Russell stepped on board the *Swallow* her eyes and her cheeks were as bright as a girl's. 'Now, Tregenza,' she said, 'this is the last time. If you don't take me straight to St. Erroc and back without disturbing me directly I am comfortable, and swinging that great dangerous boom over my head every five minutes, I shall never come on board again.'

'All right, ma'am ; she'll go along as stiff as a church to-day. You won't know you're not to home.'

They ran merrily out to Pendennis, Helen steering, and then the Manacles Point came out nearly ahead of them, and with a nice light breeze they went skimming over the blue waters of the bay.

'Now,' the old Admiral said triumphantly, 'can anything beat this ? Isn't it better than any steamer ?'

'Nothing could be more charming. If it were always like this I should not mind how often I went with you. But I don't trust it, James.'

In an hour they were running through the jagged rocks that have gored so many good ships' sides. The bell on the Manacles buoy was inaudible. There was no sea to set it swinging, and they were a long way to

windward of it. Then the breeze began to drop, and the *Swallow* moved more and more slowly through the water, and before long they were drifting upon a glassy summer sea. Astern of them lay the dark blue line of the breeze that had brought them out, and away in the offing a white-winged ship was making her way down channel. She looked beautiful with all her sails set, and was evidently moving. But the *Swallow* had not a breath of wind. She lay with her mainsail swinging just enough to lift the reef points, which were dry and loose, and make them drop with a soft sleepy rattle upon the canvas.

‘I thought so,’ Mrs. Russell said. ‘Now, James, what have you got to say? Do you think a sailing boat is a good way of getting about? I suppose we shall be here for days.’

The Admiral laughed. ‘Yes, you’ve got me again,’ he said. ‘I believe you are a witch. They’ve got a nice breeze out there too.’

‘It’s all right, ma’am,’ Tregenza said with his cheery smile. ‘There’s a bit of a draft coming off now.’

‘Yes; here it comes,’ Helen said, ‘quite a hurricane. We shall be tearing along soon, rail under.’

‘Then you will have to put me on shore, my dear. I decline to be dragged along rail under. You promised to take me quietly to St. Erroc and back, and if you don’t I shall never trust you again.’

The breeze duly came. It was very light, but

enough to quiet the reef points and make the little *Swallow* slip through the water again, with a gentle tinkling of the wavelets against her sides. A light cloud drifted over the sun. Mrs. Russell expressed herself satisfied, and went on with her book.

‘This is delicious,’ Colonel Russell said; he had stretched his long limbs upon the deck, and was leaning on his elbow, basking in the muffled sunlight,—‘this is delicious. I am a fair-weather sailor, like my mother.’

Helen looked at his face and doubted. It was not a fair-weather face. She could imagine him steering a *Long Serpent* down from the northern seas. ‘I believe you care more for the sea than you pretend to do,’ she said.

‘I love the sea, but I love it best when it is just as it is now.’ He was in a lazy mood that morning.

‘My dear boy,’ Mrs. Russell interrupted, ‘don’t be deceived into saying you love the sea just because it is smooth and pretty to-day. It is a horrible treacherous monster. One of the few really good things that old bear Dr. Johnson ever said was what he said about being at sea,—that it was worse than being in jail, because there was all the unpleasantness of a jail and danger besides.’

Helen demurred. ‘Johnson was a cockney, and incapable of appreciating the sea or the country. He deserved to go to jail for saying so.’

Russell raised himself on his hand. ‘Mrs. Langley,

I wonder at you. Mother, if you call Dr. Johnson names I shall get up a mutiny and put you both under hatches, and carry this vessel out to the Azores.'

'I will risk it, Colonel Russell. I think he was an old bear too, and I think you are very ungrateful. I was trying to help you.'

'Gratitude ought not to make us acquiesce in wrong. I am grateful to you, but I cannot permit you to be irreverent to Samuel Johnson. Have you ever read Boswell ?'

'What a question ! Yes ; and I think Dr. Johnson was a particularly disagreeable old man, overbearing and unpleasant in his ways, and rude, and altogether objectionable.'

Russell listened until Helen had ended her indictment, and then he began in his rather ponderous way. He never would stand by and hear evil spoken of men he respected, even in fun. 'Now, Mrs. Langley, if you have any remains of good feeling in you,' he said, 'I am going to cover you with shame and remorse. I admit that he was not as particular as he should have been about his cuffs and collars ; and that he used to eat and drink more heartily than was altogether nice, and that he was not always polite in his conversation. But think of the other side. To me he seems a singularly typical Englishman.'

'My dear boy, you appal me.'

'But, mother, think of it. Think how pluckily he

bore up against lifelong illness and poverty and melancholy. And was there ever any one more generous and unselfish ? How many men would pick up a poor sick woman in the street and carry her to their homes and look after her ? How many men would fill their houses with broken-down old people, and bear all their peevishness without a word ? If he was rude at times, he was magnificently independent. It was not the vulgar insolence of wealth or rank, but the impatience of a strong masterful nature to whom a fool or a scoundrel was disgusting. And he was so sensible. At almost every page of *Boswell* you find him saying something that strikes you at once as going straight to the point without sentimentality or cant. He does not rave against cant like Carlyle, but he has far less of it than Carlyle himself. Then look at his vehement patriotism and his honesty and courage. He never conceals his fear and horror of death, and yet when death comes he faces it calmly and bravely. Do you remember how he even refused all opiates at the last, though he was in great suffering, because he would not die with a clouded brain ? In all little ways too he was so English,—in his love of animals, and his physical pluck, and even in his prejudices, his readiness to believe evil of Englishmen abroad, and his contempt for foreigners and for Irishmen, and his abuse of Scotchmen. And some of his nearest friends were Scotch and Irish. That was so English, to dislike the national character, and yet like

and be good to the individual. Take him all round, surely you can forgive him his faults. He was a fine hot-tempered placable Englishman, full of courage and generosity, never hard on a man who was down, and with a steady Anglo-Saxon brain. Be just, and confess you were wrong.'

Helen and Mrs. Russell were silent for a few seconds. Then Mrs. Russell said : ' My dear boy, that is a very good lecture, but I don't agree with you. No doubt he had brains, and courage, and kindness of a sort, but he was not a gentleman. I should not have liked him if I had lived a hundred years ago, and I don't feel called upon to like him now. He was not a gentleman.'

Helen felt the truth in Russell's words, and she liked to hear him speak up for a friend ; but she had now got on another line of thought. ' Don't you think,' she said, ' that is a very foolish prejudice against the Irish and Scotch ? It seems to me so narrow and wrong.'

' I have often thought about that and tried to work it out, because I am conscious of having the prejudice myself. I don't think it is all wrong.'

' Don't you ? '

' No, I don't. I think that in so far as it is founded upon distrust of the Celtic character, it is perfectly right. The Celt is an altogether inferior creature to the Anglo-Saxon,—an undisciplined, untrustworthy creature—and it is right to recognise that.'

‘Surely you don’t call the Scotchman an undisciplined, untrustworthy creature?’

‘No, I don’t; but I think that is just the difference. The Scotch are largely of our own race,—Saxons. Any real dislike to them would be foolish, and I don’t think it exists, or existed with Johnson. Of course there are old recollections of enmity, and little differences of dialect and character. We think them vain and argumentative and over canny; and they think us not altogether perfect in other ways. But at bottom we respect and like each other, as we ought to do. There is nothing finer in the world than a real Scotch gentleman, and the whole Scotch character is sound and strong.’

‘But how about the Celtic Highlander?’

‘Well, I believe that where he is really a Celt, not a Dane or Norwegian, he is still a poorish creature.’

‘That shocks all my notions. Surely the Highlanders have shown splendid loyalty and courage?’

‘That is a long story, and I suppose they have their virtues. But it seems to me that they were always wild and unsteady. The Saxon was throughout the stronger and better man, or he would not have taken the Lowlands.’

‘But look at our Highland regiments.’

‘Our Highland regiments are in no way better than our English regiments. There has been a great deal of sentiment and nonsense talked about the Highlanders since Scott’s time, and the dress is showy

which goes a long way. Besides, the Highland regiments, if I mistake not, are merely Scotch regiments. A man is not a Highland Celt because he is dressed up in a kilt and says "ken" and "bonny" and "bairn," as Shakespeare did. That is English, or used to be. It isn't Gaelic.'

'I don't know enough about it to argue with you, but you are attacking some of my most cherished ideas. I always had Flora Macdonald and her countrymen held up to me as a type of all that was noble and chivalrous.'

'Flora Macdonald was a plucky little woman, no doubt; but I do not see that her countrymen were particularly admirable. However, I am not concerned to fight against the Scotch Highlanders, who, I believe, are largely Danish and Norwegian, and moreover are few in numbers. Ireland is the place where you have the unmitigated Celt, and there I think he is unpleasant, not to say contemptible.'

'Surely you can't call the northern Irish contemptible; and the army is full of Irish. Haven't they always been fine soldiers?'

'It depends upon what you mean by the word Irish; many of what we call Irish are Englishmen or Scotchmen settled in Ireland. I always think they are apt to be touched with Celtic untruthfulness, but of course they are good stuff; and even the Celt fights when led by Englishmen. But take what the Irish "patriot" calls the Irish nation,—that is to say,

the Irish Celts who hate England—when did they ever really fight well on their own account? When were they ever anything but a set of wild, undisciplined savages, without cohesion or self-control, “rough, rug-headed kerns,” whom anything like their own number of English could drive like deer?

Russell was speaking earnestly now. Woman-like, Helen disengaged and broke away.

‘Don’t you think their being Catholics has made us very unfair to them?’

‘Perhaps it has; but there again I think the prejudice is in a sense right. I don’t believe I am a bigot, but the old English feeling of “No Popery” seems to me quite sound. We will not be priest-ridden ourselves, and we will not trust a priest-ridden people. The essence of Roman policy is priestly interference in temporal affairs.’

‘But that is no reason for being unjust, and depriving a Catholic people of their rights in favour of a small Protestant minority?’

‘I daresay we were unjust in old days; intolerance was universal, and I don’t suppose we were free from it. I certainly would not uphold any injustice now, if there still exists any; but that has nothing to do with the Celtic character.’

‘Every one who knows the Irish says they are warm-hearted. If we do them justice they will be content and grateful.’

‘Perhaps; personally I don’t think so. I would

do them justice for our own sake ; it is not worthy of England to be unjust. But I would expect nothing in return. The Celt will remain a Celt, and will continue to hate the superior race, because it is superior. My belief is that Catholic Ireland is the cross which England has been given to bear, and we must not hope to get rid of it. We must do justice, and we must hit hard, harder than we have ever done, when there is treason and disloyalty, as there will be. I believe want of hard hitting has done at least as much harm as injustice. Spare the rod and spoil the Celt, who is only a child.'

The old Admiral had not spoken since the discussion began ; he interfered now : ' I daresay you're right, Hal, but I should be sorry to think it ; some of the finest fellows I have known have been Irishmen.'

' I don't doubt it, father. I have known some fine Irishmen too, apparently real Irish ; of course everything is comparative. Besides,' he continued with a laugh, ' you can't mix with Englishmen, and read English books, and try to talk English for generations, without gaining something from it.'

' Colonel Russell, I want to ask you one thing. How does your theory hold in Wales and here ? Why are not the Welsh and Cornish everything that is evil ? '

' Oh dear, this is hard ; I thought it would come. Well, I think the Welsh are not by nature quite as strong and steady as Englishmen proper, but they were not cut off from England by a sea. They were

a small population in the same island, and came more thoroughly under English rule and influence ; and climate, and afterwards Protestantism, had some effect upon their character. But even now I think they have some Celtic characteristics.'

'What ?'

'They seem to me more excitable than English-men proper, and more prone to extremes in religion and politics, and more conceited. I am not sure that they have as much sense of fair play. There is a distinct type about Shakespeare's Welshmen,—Fluellen, and Owen Glendower, and Parson Evans—and it seems to me the type is not extinct.'

'Go on, Colonel Russell, don't spare us.'

'No, I shall not go on any more. But if you speak to the excellent old gardener at Menarvor he will talk to you about "pays" and "banes." There is the Celtic blood cropping out. If a man says "pays" and "banes" it is obvious that he is capable of shooting you from behind a hedge.'

'Poor old man, he is so good. He has been there all his life, and loves every bush on the place, and works day and night.'

'Yes, I know ; but he says "pays" and "banes." He makes fritters of the Queen's English, like Parson Evans. Now I will not talk any more ; it is not fair to make me defend my theories like this. What I mean is, that the solid steady part of Great Britain is the Anglo-Saxon part, including the Saxon Scotch.

The Celtic fringes are not as good material, though they have been improved by Anglo-Saxon rule and influence. And in Ireland, where that influence has not been so strongly exerted, the Celt is still a very inferior creature indeed. And Englishmen, with their excessive generosity, have attributed to the Celt, whom they have conquered, all sorts of picturesque and attractive qualities which chiefly exist in English imagination.'

'I see. In fact, the Anglo-Saxon is the salt of the earth, and any one who does not think so is detestable.'

'Certainly. If the whole world were Anglo-Saxon it would be immeasurably improved. Come, you don't doubt that yourself?'

'No, I suppose I don't. Still, I like the Cornishman, and even the unspeakable Irishman; and I believe if we like him he will in time get to like us. At all events, we ought to try. He never can like us if we despise him.'

'You are quite right, dear,' Mrs. Russell said.
'You are too hard, Hal.'

Colonel Russell was silent; he was thinking over what Helen had said.

Then they had another calm, and as they were opposite a pretty bit of the coast, Mrs. Russell persuaded him to make a sketch. He roused himself and did so, and Helen looked up at times and saw with surprise how the work grew under his big, shapely

hand. Directly he began to do anything he threw his whole heart into it, and now his face was as grave and earnest as if he had been sketching for his life. He knew that a breath of wind would interrupt him, and he worked fast, with a big brush. It was the style that suited him best. 'There,' he said, after half an hour's work, 'that is all I can do. There is another breeze coming,' and he handed over his pad to his mother.

'Very good,' she said; 'but I think it wants something to give it life.' She passed it over to Helen.

'I think it would be perfect if the *Swallow* were in it, or better still, that fishing-boat out to seaward. That would just supply the bit of colour it wants, I think; but I know nothing about painting.'

Mrs. Russell looked out at the boat. It was a small lobster-boat with a tan-red lug-sail. 'Put it in, Henry,' she said; 'Mrs. Langley is quite right, I think.'

'It isn't there, mother.'

'No, but it might be,—it is close by. And you can draw it from life. I really think that is fair.'

He shook his head and laughed. 'With the sun and the wind on the wrong side? Don't tempt me, mother. I could never trust my sketches if I began doing those things. I like to know when I look at a sketch that it is exactly what I saw, or as near as I could get it at the time. Here comes the breeze.'

It came well this time, and before long they were

going fast down the coast. Suddenly Helen, who had been silent for a few minutes, said, 'There it is,—there is St. Erroc!' In five minutes more they could see it clearly,—a distant blue spike, the top of a church steeple, rising above some trees.

Helen took the *Swallow* round the rocky point, and brought up opposite the landing-place. How familiar it was even now, after all these years! There was the little cove between the towering rocky cliffs, and the bit of pebbly beach, and the two or three stone-built fishermen's cottages, and the country road leading up the gully to St. Erroc. The water in the cove was perfectly smooth as they rowed in to shore, and they could see far down into its transparent depths.

They decided to bring their lunch-basket and have a picnic; so Helen took them up by the road between the high, solid Cornish 'hedges' to a quiet corner she remembered at the top of the hill. They got there sooner than she had expected, and there was St. Erroc half a mile from them, and away to the north were the bare moorlands, and below was the rocky line of the coast, and the beautiful green and purple sea with hardly a sail to break its solitude. How strange it seemed to be there again! Nothing was changed, absolutely nothing. There was the very patch of yellow snapdragon on the wall by the gate; she had picked a blossom from it many a time. In the field inside there used always to be little wild

pansies. She walked in, and saw them at once. It seemed to her as if one determined effort must bring her old life back in reality, and that she would walk into Laneithin and find her grandfather and Aunt Madge, and all just as before. She was impatient to go on now, and found it very hard to sit still and eat lunch.

However, it was soon over, and then they walked on into the little village. Nothing was altered there, except that the houses looked smaller and the road shorter. Yes, there was a little new shop near the inn, and the inn was smarter, for tourists had now begun to come to St. Erroc. They went into the old church-yard, stepping carefully upon the granite blocks under the covered gateway, and it seemed to Helen as if she were in a dream. She walked down the path, through the gravestones she used to know so well as a child, to the church door. Near it was the vault where her people lay, covered by a square tomb with the name 'Treveryan' carved in the granite on one side of it. They entered the church, which had never been 'restored.' There it was, exactly as it used to be, with its straight narrow seats of worm-eaten wood. On the right-hand side, near the pulpit, was the Treveryan pew, a large square pew rather higher than the others, and lined with what had once been green cloth. In the wall, above the raised wooden back, were two or three monumental slabs. How often she had read the inscriptions on them! There was one she had not

seen,—her grandfather's. She read the inscription over now, and sighed as she thought of the handsome old man who used to sit there in the corner, and had been so good to her. She wished her father were lying with his own people too, instead of far away in his Indian grave. Then she found herself alone; the others had gone quietly on and left her.

She went into the pew and sat down in her old place. Not the slightest thing was changed; even the little hole in the cloth which she used to put her finger into as a small child was just as it used to be. Everything material absolutely the same, and yet everything in her life utterly altered! Was it possible that when she last sat there she had never known Guy, never really known her father?

After a few minutes she got up and walked out of the church, with a last look round at all the old familiar things, and found the Russells looking away over the sea. They went to the village again, and she led them by the path through the fields, past the old farm, straight to Laneithin.

There it was, down among the trees, in the hollow. They came to the big stone gateway and walked in. The house looked smaller, and there was something deserted about it; no one was living in it now, but it was all so familiar. There was the little window of the room at the top, with the railed verandah, where she used to be sent when she was a naughty child. She remembered throwing a glass of medicine out of

that window one day, and the glass fell on the flower-bed and did not break. She would not go in; she could see that the ground-floor rooms were dismantled and bare; it would only be sadness to her, and she must not keep the Russells waiting. So they went back into the road, and on a few steps to the big farm buildings and stable-yard which adjoined the house, and then turned back towards St. Erroc spire.

How often she had thought of Laneithin and St. Erroc when she had been thousands of miles away! Was she really there again with the wild, solitary Cornish moorland about her? You do not know what it is, you who have never left England. You do not know how the old places and the old faces 'at home' become sweet and strange and sacred to those who think of them year after year among aliens in a foreign land. Alas! there were no old faces in St. Erroc,—none that Helen loved. She did see in the road one that she knew, the face of a man who used to work at Laneithin as a gardener; she spoke to him, and he remembered her, but seemed little interested to learn who she was.

She stopped on the way back at a cottage, the wall of which was nearly covered by a tall fuchsia which grew into the upper windows. In her day a dear old woman used to live here, Mrs. James, who told her Cornish stories and taught her Cornish words. The door was opened by a smart-looking young woman with a board-school manner and a fringe. 'Mrs.

James? No. I have heard tell of an old Mrs. James who once lived here, but she died long ago.'

Helen walked on to the village. She had been with her aunt into most of those houses, but she had not the heart to try now whether there was any one left whom she knew as a girl. What did they care for her? She would have found plenty of the old folk about if she could have stayed; but it was time to go on, and she felt depressed and tired. How often she had thought of coming back to St. Erroc, and of every familiar place she would go to, and of all the old people she would meet. And this was the end. A hasty half-hour or two, and no welcome; and the feeling that she was a stranger in the home of her fathers. She was very silent as they walked back to the cove. When they were on board again the Admiral looked at her face and patted her hand and said: 'Well, well, you could not have lived there alone.'

They sailed home with a gentle breeze off shore. Once or twice it almost failed them by the headlands, but they got round somehow, and found the breeze again behind the point. It was a beautiful evening as they threaded the Manacles and sailed into Falmouth Bay. The sun was low down over the round hills inland, but it showed up the gray tower of Pendennis, and the white lighthouse, and the blue line of coast away to the Dodman. They kept a little inside Pendennis, in case the wind should draw more ahead; but it held true, and soon after sunset they were under

the gray castle. They were almost becalmed there, but a little air came down from the inner harbour and took them slowly home.

Helen felt happier now. When they landed in the summer twilight the tide was high, and the smooth clear water lay upon the pebbles, within a few inches of the bushes and silver weed under the garden bank. As they walked up under the trees Russell said to her : 'I am glad I came to-day. I feel now as if I had known you all your life. I can imagine you as a child in that house, and sailing along these coasts with old Tregenza.'

And for a moment she caught the thrill of feeling in his voice.

CHAPTER XLIX

A ROUGH SAIL

HELEN stayed on at Menarvor for some weeks longer. They seemed determined to keep her until they went themselves, and they knew she had no real reason for going except the fear of staying too long. And with their cordial faces before her, how could she doubt? She knew the old people really liked having her there, and still as they pressed her to stay she stayed and stayed. It was the last time.

The lime at the bottom of the lawn grew yellower daily, until its top shone very bright against the blue water. It was still delicate and beautiful even in decay. The chestnut got rusty and then brown in patches. It had been richer in its glory; it was coarser in its ruin. The oaks along the rocky water-line began to turn. The fields were covered with rows of corn shocks, looking in the distance like soldiers skirmishing; and then the corn was carried and the fields were bare. The tangled hedges were almost flowerless, except for a few belated blackberry blossoms and the soft green of the ivy. But they were still

full of colour. There were the yellow and brown fern leaves, and the long festoons of bryony, with its heavy berries of red and green and yellow. There were other berries too,—the honeysuckle, green and red, and the wild rose, and the vivid glossy crimson and green of the holly, and the duller, deeper tint of the hips and haws; and over it all was the trailing corn left by the waggons.

They had some delicious autumn weather, blue skies and gentle breezes. Then they used to go out sailing, all of them together, and come back at sunset. Sometimes they were later, and the darkness had fallen, and the thousand lights of Falmouth glittered tier upon tier above the waters of the harbour. Mrs. Russell had taken to it now. Her sail to St. Erroc had done something to convert her, and her next attempt won her over completely.

It was a warm and cloudless afternoon. A very light breeze from the southward just stirred the surface of the water here and there, leaving smooth patches which shone like polished metal. A slight swell was coming in from the open sea. As the little *Swallow* drifted slowly out with the tide, catching a breath of air at intervals, they could hear every sound across the still water,—the shrill cries of some gulls hovering over a school of fish a mile away; the bark of a dog in a field near St. Just, where two men were rabbit-shooting; the distant roar of the train as it passed over a viaduct miles inland. A boat was rowing across to

the Ganges, and the sound of the oars in the rowlocks came to them with every stroke. Through it they heard six bells strike on the ship, whose ensign was hanging motionless. They went slowly out through the vessels at anchor in the harbour, and watched the smooth swell breaking in foam upon the rocks at Trefusis Point. There was a light haze ahead of them, over the open sea ; and against it stood out the gray tower of Pendennis, and the dark form of a schooner with all sails set steering east, and the tall mark on the Black Rock. As the sun sank, a purple light came over Falmouth town ; there was a flush above the haze to seaward, and a brighter flush over the long line of hill to the east. The water was coloured with exquisite shades of blue and rose as its smooth surface waved with the swell. Then the flush faded away from the eastern sky. To westward, over the wooded hills where the sun had gone down, there was a crimson glow which seemed to pass through the deep sapphire of the sky, and yet not to mingle with it, so that both remained pure and perfect, though together. At last two great planets came out, one to southward and one nearer the sunset, over the old church and oak-lined creek of Mylor. As they brightened, the *Swallow* glided up to her moorings under the shadow of the trees.

After that Mrs. Russell often came out and enjoyed her sail, or pretended she did. Perhaps she was not altogether thoughtless of others.

Then for some days there was heavy rain and wind, and looking down from the windows they could see the black gusts smite and spin upon the smooth water under the bank, while a little farther out it was white with crested waves. Now and then a hungry gull struggled past over the wave-tops, against the wind, with the spray flying past it. The leafy screen between the windows and the sea had got thin. The trunk and branches of the lime were showing; but it looked greener, more like spring again,—the wind had combed out all the yellow leaves. The little *Swallow* lay at her moorings, plainly visible now, with her head towards them. They could see her starting and moving uneasily as the gusts struck her. It was too wet and rough to go out.

After a few days the bad weather passed off, and it grew fine again. Helen came down one morning to find the sun shining brightly, and the wind gone round to the northward. Colonel Russell, who had been away shooting, had come back by the morning train. Then Helen and the Admiral settled that they would go out for one more real good sail down the coast.

‘Where shall we go?’ she asked.

‘I don’t care. It is all the same to me. Would you like to go to St. Erroc again?’

Helen shook her head. ‘No. If you really don’t mind, I would rather go the other way.’

‘Well, if it is fine to-morrow, why not start early and try Fowey or Looe? We might run over there

to breakfast and get back to dinner comfortably if the wind is off shore as it is to-day.'

'That would be very nice. I should like to see Looe.'

Mrs. Russell declined to be one of the party. 'No, James, I will stay at home,' she said. 'You would only have a calm if I came; and in any case I don't care to be out all day. It's too much for me.'

'Will you come, Hal?' the Admiral said.

'No, sir; I think not. I will stay with my mother.'

Helen was suddenly conscious that the pleasure of the trip had departed. She had thought they would all go. Mrs. Russell was too wise to discuss the question in public, but when they broke up for the night she made her son come into her room for a minute. 'Hal, dear, I want you to go to-morrow.'

'I would rather not, mother.'

'My boy,' she said, 'I want you to go. You will go to please me.'

'Mother, dear, it is no use. I am only making myself miserable. She does not care a straw for me. It was plainer than ever when we met this morning.'

'Try. You cannot tell. I believe she does, or will. You will go?'

'I will go if you wish it, but it is no use.'

'I am sure you are wrong, dear. It will all come right in the end.'

The mother and son understood one another now, and were plotting against Helen's peace. He had told his secret a few days before, and his mother had

smiled in his face and said, 'I am so glad. I have seen it for some time past, and it has made me very happy.' Since then they had often talked of it.

There was much cooking of pasties and other good things that night, and in the morning all was on board.

When Helen got up and looked out of her window at sunrise it was a beautiful morning. The sky was almost cloudless, and through the branches of the lime she could see the blue water rippled by a light westerly breeze. The *Swallow* was lying with her head to the wind and her mainsail set. It was perfect, or would have been if they had all been going. She dressed and went down to the dining-room, and found Henry Russell making the tea. He had a handy soldier's way of making himself useful. 'Good-morning,' she said. 'You are up early.'

'Yes; I've changed my mind, and am coming with you.' He looked at her, and saw that she took the announcement with her usual pleasant frankness, the frankness of indifference.

'Are you?' she said. 'I'm very glad. I wish Mrs. Russell were coming too.'

'She would not,' he answered with a sigh; 'but she asked me to go, and I saw it made her unhappy that I should stay on her account, so I agreed.' How was he to know that his going had made the brightness of the morning tenfold more bright?

It was a little after seven o'clock when they got on

board. The breeze was still very light, and the sky blue, with a few faint white clouds. 'There isn't no *weight* in the wind,' Tregenza said. When they were opposite Falmouth the breeze came off stronger. The flags on the ships were flying out now, and the *Swallow* began to move through the water. Before eight o'clock they had passed close to the lighthouse rock, and were round the point heading for the eastward. Then they set a spinnaker, and ran down the coast with the wind nearly astern. The sun was bright and pleasantly warm, but to the northward, over the land, some dark clouds had begun to gather. Under them were the pale stubbles, a few still bristling with corn shocks. In the offing was a ship under full sail going up channel. Falmouth Bay and the blue Manacles lay astern of them, and right ahead was the flat, short-cut point of the Dodman. In-shore, on their bow, the big purple mass of the Gull Rock stood out against the cliffs.

They fixed a line and caught a mackerel. Tregenza held it writhing on his knees, and took his knife to cut a bright bit of skin from its back for bait.

'No,' Helen said eagerly; 'you shall not do that. I won't have it. Put the poor thing away. That is horrid of you.'

Dick looked up in surprise, and laughed. When he saw that she really meant it, he said, 'Very well, miss,' and threw the fish into a bucket.

Then they began to move too fast for fishing.

They ran past little hilly Port Scatho, and Gerrans steeple, which stood out clearly against the dark sky. The blue of the sea was beginning to turn to a leaden colour as the clouds drifted over the sun; and the breeze was freshening, and small white crests began to form.

They ran past the Gull Rock, and Penare, which seemed to be covered with heather; and across Veryan Bay, with its high gray rocks and yellow stubbles. By ten o'clock they were off the bold rocky head of the Dodman. It did not look flat now. Over the sea the sun was still bright at times, but to the north the sky looked unpromising; and as they ran across the mouth of St. Austell Bay there was a heavy rain shower over Mevagissey, and over the white lines of the clay works on the hills. They could see Fowey now, Tennyson's 'haven under the hill,' with its great red and white beacon; and behind it, inland, were the blue peaks of the Cornish moors. They could see Looe Island too, farther up the coast; and farther again the point of Rame Head, which loomed faintly out like an island. Before noon they ran past Polperro, the smugglers' village, nestling under its lofty cliffs, and in a few minutes more Rame Head came out clearly, with the low blue line of the Devon coast beyond. They were in sunlight again now, and it lay bright upon the green top and gray rocky sides of Looe Island. The spinnaker was beginning to strain, and the little *Swallow* was lifting over a stern sea.

Away to seaward, on their bow, they could just make out the gray spike of the Eddystone. Then they ran round the island and straight into Looe Creek. It was high tide, and the *Swallow*, with her very light draught, could run almost alongside the buildings.

They landed, and had lunch at the hotel ; but they had little time to spare, as the wind would be almost ahead going back ; so, after walking through the little narrow town, and seeing the bridge, and the wooded river parting above, they got on board again and set sail. By that time a few drops of rain had fallen, and it was beginning to look very dirty outside. ‘I don’t like the look of it,’ the Admiral said, with a glance at Helen. ‘I am not at all sure that we ought to try it. It’s a head wind and a rising sea. What do you think, Tregenza ?’

‘It is looking a bit dirty, sir, but we could always get into Fowey if it come on to blow. We shall see better what it’s like when we get outside the island.’

When they got outside the island there was no doubt about it. The sea had risen and the wind was strong. It was raining hard ahead of them. ‘We’ll have a *stream o’ rain* directly,’ Tregenza said.

‘What do you say, Mrs. Langley ?’ the Admiral asked. ‘Shall we stop the night at Looe and go back in the morning ?’

‘Oh no,’ she said, thinking they were hesitating on

her account ; 'let us go on. It may be only a shower, and it is quite early yet. We can go into Fowey if it gets bad.'

'Very well, my dear. As you like.'

Colonel Russell had been rather silent all the morning. He looked a little troubled now. 'I suppose it is all right,' he said ; 'but it does not seem to me the sort of day for ladies to be out. It looks very much as if it were going to blow.'

Helen only laughed. But it was going to blow ; before long they were beating against a heavy wind and sea, with a blinding rain in their faces. It was very disagreeable, and after an hour or two it became evident that they could not hope to make Falmouth before dark. 'I'm afraid we can't do it, sir,' Tregenza said ; 'busy all.' It would be as much as they could do to get round the Dodman, and that would be useless. To make matters worse, the wind, which had gone round a little to the northward, and given them hopes, now shifted almost to south-west. They could not risk getting into a south-west gale at night on that rock-bound coast, with not a chance of shelter between the Dodman and Falmouth. So they gave it up, and went into Fowey, and found quarters at a hotel, and had a very pleasant evening. About sunset the rain passed off and the sky cleared ; and they strolled about and saw the little town, and the yachts and coasting craft in the narrow harbour, and the pretty river above. It all seemed so quiet and

peaceful that they found it difficult to realise that an hour or two before they had been struggling against that boisterous wind and sea.

When they went on board in the morning, after an early breakfast, it was still fine, but there was apparently some sea outside, and the breeze was strong from the south-west. They beat out of the harbour in the wake of two Brixham trawlers, and from the first they saw that they were going to have a roughish time of it. A heavy sea was breaking on the rocks at the harbour mouth, and the weather looked very unsettled. However, they were all good sailors, and they started merrily enough, with a bright sun overhead.

Dick Tregenza gave the first sign of care. His crew consisted of one man some years older than himself, who spoke strong Cornish when he spoke at all, which was very rarely. After the two had had a good look round, and out to windward, and a short consultation, Tregenza came and suggested that, instead of trying to make the Dodman 'to wance,' they should make a short tack or two in St. Austell Bay, and keep as much in-shore and under shelter as possible. 'It'll be smoother watter for the lady,' he said, and the Admiral agreed.

Soon afterwards one of the two trawlers went about and made for the bay too. The other stood boldly out to sea. Both had two reefs in their mainsails, but their topsails were set. Helen noticed it. 'They are

able vessels, miss,' Tregenza said. 'They'll keep their topsails up a'most in any weather.' In comparison with the tiny *Swallow* they looked very big and strong. There was no other sail in sight.

They kept close in-shore by Par and Mevagissey, and managed to get a certain amount of shelter. The view was fine. Black rain-squalls gathered over the cliffs, and came sweeping down upon the sea. At times the sun broke out again for a few minutes; but this occurred at longer and longer intervals, and the sky got darker and the wind and the sea got higher. And sooner or later they must come out of what shelter they had to get round the Dodman.

They ought not to have tried it, but Helen would not hear of going back. 'It will make me miserable,' she said. 'You know you would not think of it if it were not for me; and I really enjoy this.'

They had a thorough dusting when they made the attempt. The sea was running very high indeed now, and the squalls fell upon them with a force that was almost terrifying. The wind literally shrieked as it tore through the rigging, and sent the spray and the rain flying across the little boat. It was difficult to steer with that blinding storm on your face, and after a time the old Admiral found it too much for him. Dick Tregenza did not seem to mind. He stood at the helm singing softly to himself, with a smile in his eyes, as if everything had been perfectly comfortable. Nevertheless, it got worse and worse. The sky still

grew darker and the squalls fiercer; and before long it needed all his watchful readiness of eye and hand to keep those huge green seas from breaking over her bows. It was beautiful to see how he met them, with a little drop of the wrist, sailing her all the time, and never losing way. But even he could not always keep them off; and now and then some solid water came on board, and Bob had to do some pumping.

Helen took it all very coolly. She had a water-proof with a hood to it, which she fastened tight over her head, and she faced the weather like one to the manner born. She could not go below, she said; it made her feel ill at once. She seemed to understand and enjoy Tregenza's steering. 'Oh, well done! Wasn't that good?' she said once or twice, as the little *Swallow* swung up dry and buoyant over a vicious curling hill of water; and Dick Tregenza laughed.

Then they had two accidents. An unusually fierce squall fell upon them and blew their jib to ribbons; and almost at the same moment their housed topmast was 'carr'd away,' as Dick said, about four feet from the truck. He handed over the helm to Colonel Russell with a word of warning, and put things to rights in an incredibly short space of time, and came back smiling.

But Russell thought this was too much. He had felt uncomfortable while Tregenza was at work on the mast. The outlook to windward was just as bad as

it could be, and every time they went about again and headed for the open sea, in their endeavours to get round that horrible point, he was conscious of a feeling of excitement which was not entirely pleasurable. Helen showed no sign of alarm, but he thought she must be frightened, and he spoke to Tregenza about it. She was not frightened. The Admiral had got her into the shelter of the companion, out of the rain and spray. Now and then she looked at Russell and thought what a strong, resolute face he had. 'If I were a man I would follow him anywhere,' she said to herself.

'Are you sure it's safe?' Russell said to Tregenza. 'Remember we have got a lady on board. Hadn't we better give it up and run back to Fowey?'

'Please yourself about that, sir.'

'We could do it, I suppose?'

'Oh yes, sir, we could do it, of course. We should go along as dry as a merr. Ye see we should be before the wind then.'

'Are you sure we can get to Falmouth?'

'Oh yes, sir; bound to get there some time.'

'There is no port this side of it, is there?'

'No, sir; but we'll get a little shelter directly we're round the Dodman. We're all right, sir.' And he smiled cheerfully. 'Ye see we're a *sailing* of her all the time. If it got real bad we could always heave to.'

Russell did not feel convinced, but he was conscious

of knowing very little about the matter, and he said, 'When do you think you will get in ?'

'Can't say, sir. If the wind should happen to fly round to the nor'ard we wouldn't take long getting in.'

Russell gave it up, and Tregenza took to singing again gently, a hymn tune with rather indefensible words to it. But neither tune nor words were audible in that weather.

They got round the Dodman at last, and, as Tregenza had said, they found some shelter in Veryan Bay. Close in-shore there was much less sea ; but the squalls were tremendous nevertheless. They seemed to fall from the top of the cliffs with a sudden slap upon the water, and the little vessel cowered and bounded under them like a frightened deer. Moreover, they had now to get round the Gull Rock and Penare. This was the Dodman over again ; and long before they succeeded, both the Admiral and his son were heartily sorry they had attempted it. The weather was worse than ever. It was blowing almost a gale now, and away to the south-west both sky and sea were white with wind. Helen was quite steady, and laughed at it all ; but she had had several hours of knocking about, without much food, and was beginning to look tired. Russell felt unhappy, and cursed his own folly for not protesting more strongly at first.

They got round the Gull at last, and worked away in short tacks under the coast to Port Scatho. The dark clouds were hurrying overhead at a pace that

made one giddy. And they had still to get round the exposed piece of coast before the lighthouse point. That meant another long beat in the open, and it was past four o'clock. Their last tack before going out they ran in close to the rocky shore. In a field above the cliffs they saw some sheep under a wall, and two men were driving a cart across a bit of open ground close by; but the little cutter struggling with the winds and the waves within a few hundred feet of them was as utterly out of reach of help under those iron rocks as if it had been in the middle of the Atlantic. One of the trawlers had gone out of sight round the point; the other was still in sight, but a couple of miles away to windward.

‘We ought to get a little shelter from the Manacles, oughtn’t we?’ Russell said, as they got near shore.

‘Not much, sir. We shall have a nasty sea outside now.’

They had a very nasty sea. The wind was stronger than ever, a real south-west gale from the Atlantic; the sea was shorter and worse than outside the other points; the tide was running against the wind. And unluckily they had what was worse than a nasty sea, —a nasty accident. As they went about under the cliffs, Helen was standing with her head just above deck. They were in comparatively smooth water, and she had perhaps got careless, or she was tired; but as the boom went over she missed her hold, and after a stagger was thrown heavily with her head against the

edge of the well. The next instant Henry Russell had caught her up. It was no time for ceremony, and he got his right arm round her, and dragging himself up by his left on to the windward side of the boat, sat holding her firmly, with her head on his shoulder. His father pushed back the hood from her face, and they found a slight bruise near her left temple ; there was no other mark to be seen. Her face was white and wet with spray. They gave her some brandy and kept her in the air, and in a few minutes she woke to find herself lying in Russell's arms.

It was a happy waking. The pain was not bad, and there was something in the touch of those strong arms which would have made up for any pain. She was glad to be there, at rest, though the great seas were tossing their white crests high above the *Swallow's* bows, and the wind was screaming about her, and the spray flying over the little vessel from stem to stern. But as Helen woke to complete consciousness a burning blush covered her face, and she disengaged herself from Russell's support. She thanked them both confusedly, and declared herself perfectly well, and made many apologies ; and then took refuge below.

In her ears and her heart was the deep tenderness of Russell's voice, but the sudden recognition of her own love for him made her seem cold and shy, and he thought he had offended her. When she appeared again, unable to bear the restraint and motion of the tiny cabin, he was cold too, and polite and reserved.

They fought on for two hours longer trying to weather the point, and then, not long before dark, the *Swallow* made a final effort and got round. Her wings were sadly clipped now,—a small storm jib, streaming with water, and the merest strip of her big mainsail. They fluttered in the wind for a moment, and she was borne back, nearly too far again; but she had held on seaward until she had something to spare, and she stuck to it bravely, and at last she fairly won her fight and came in triumphantly over the big waves between the Black Rock and the lighthouse. At the same time a tall three-masted schooner ran in from the Manacles close reefed. Soon afterwards they were in comparatively smooth water under the shelter of Pendennis, and Dick Tregenza was singing softly to himself, with a smile in his eyes.

‘Well done!’ Helen said. It was easier to speak to him, and besides he deserved some thanks. ‘That was a splendid sail. What a good sea-boat she is!’

‘Yes, miss,’ he said. ‘We come along nicely, didn’t us? Them big trawlers didn’t bate us by very much after all. We was sailing of ’er all the time. It ’ud take a lot o’ weather to stop she.’

Helen laughed and turned to Russell. ‘Did you ever hear such west-country grammar? Still, he did sail her well, didn’t he—for a Celt?’

But Russell answered at random, and when they walked up from the little stone pier under the flag-staff he was silent and his heart was sore. And he

could have taken her without a word, if he had only known !

Next day somehow they were at a greater distance from each other. Russell felt intensely depressed. He told his mother all about it, and said he was afraid he had offended Helen. She assured him he was wrong, and begged him to pluck up courage and ask Helen herself. ‘No, no,’ he said, ‘not now, not under our own roof.’

‘If she cares for you she will not mind your asking her under your own roof.’

But he shook his head.

‘Shall I speak to her?’

No ; his pride rebelled against that, and besides it would destroy all their friendship. His mother must promise to say nothing ; if he was to fail, Helen must never know that his mother had known. So Helen went away and left them, and Russell had not spoken to her.

It was a beautiful morning when she said good-bye, and drove away with the old Admiral. There was a balmy feeling in the air, almost like spring. The sun was bright, and a robin was singing ; but Helen’s heart was very sad. She was saying good-bye for ever to the house she had come to love in a few short months. Perhaps she was saying good-bye for ever to the Russells. Perhaps she would never see him again,—the man to whose face she had hardly dared that morning to lift her eyes. He shook hands

with her quietly, and said 'Good-bye' in his deep, level, courteous voice, as if he did not care. The Admiral chatted away, and she answered him pluckily, but with a dull pain at her heart. She was glad when it was all over and the train was off.

As she steamed away towards Devonshire, it seemed to her that she had never known until now the very depth of depression and wretchedness. When the train came near Par she looked out of the window and saw the Fowey beacon and St. Austell Bay and the open sea. Ah ! if she were only out there again in the gale and the rain-squalls, with the great waves seething about her. What happiness it had been ! As the train moved on, and she lost sight of the sea, she sat back and, leaning her head against the corner of the carriage, broke into a passion of tears. After a time she roused herself, and dried her eyes hastily. 'I will not give in,' she said to herself; 'I will find work and be myself again. It was a dream, and it is over.'

She was better for a time, but as the train passed into Devon the pang came to her heart again, and she looked back with her face working. 'Good-bye, Cornwall,' she said; 'dear Cornwall, good-bye, good-bye !'

CHAPTER L

THE LESSON LEARNT

HELEN felt less miserable when she was at home again under old Pow's care. The little woman was so delighted to get her back. Her brown eyes were bright with happiness, and there was something very comforting about her merry laugh, and her nervous, impudent, loving ways. In spite of herself Helen felt better. But it all came back again at night, and she lay awake for hours, listening to the rising wind, and thinking sadly over all her life. Now there was added to her sorrows a feeling of lightness and untruth. She had been too happy of late ; she had forgotten Guy and her child. She had not even the melancholy consolation of knowing that she had kept their place sacred in her heart. She had let another come in and possess it, and one who cared nothing for his conquest. As she thought of her treason she thought also of him, and felt for a moment as she had felt when she lay in his arms. The remembrance made her heart beat wildly, even in the midst of her self-reproach. In the darkness the blood surged over

her face and neck and bosom. Unconsciously she covered her face with her hands, and a storm of sobs shook her, sobs that were the expression of passionate love and despair as much as of shame and remorse. She fell asleep at last, worn out with the conflict.

In the morning the wind had dropped, and it was not raining. After breakfast Helen walked up to the cemetery, to see Roland's grave. All was in good order, but it looked very dreary in its solitary corner under the gray sky. She was alone in the place, and she stood dreaming of him and all his goodness to her; and as she stood the thought suddenly came into her mind, 'I wonder whether he is here—whether he can see me and hear me.'

She knelt down upon the stone edge of the tomb. 'Ro, do you know it all? Do you despise me? You told me to be happier if I could, and I was so lonely. If I have been wicked, it is all over now; it was only for a little.'

She listened for an answer, longing and half-expecting to hear his voice. She did not listen in vain. That loving voice was silent for ever, but another voice spoke to her heart. It seemed to her as if an angel bent down and said: 'He cannot hear you, but be comforted. He would not blame you; he would understand and pity.'

She turned away and walked home, and from that time it began to be easier. She set to work resolutely to find employment for herself, and she summoned up

all her courage and pride to help her. Colonel Russell had never said a word, or shown any sign of love for her ; his profession was everything to him. Why should she let him trouble her thoughts ? After all, there was no great harm done. She had never let him see that she cared for him, and she never would now if she met him again. Besides, she did not really care ; it was only a passing weakness, a sense of liking and admiration which she had mistaken for something deeper. With work she would soon forget ; she would not let herself think of him, and in a little while he would be nothing to her. So she argued with herself, and perhaps if she had not seen him again she would have mastered her love for him ; she might even have come to believe that it had never had any serious existence. At times the veil of self-deceit which she had been elaborately weaving between her eyes and her heart was torn asunder. The thought of him would come to her suddenly, in the midst of her reading, or when she was with others, and her heart would stop and throb in spite of her. She saw his dark eyes on her again, or caught the thrill of his deep voice as she walked up with him under the trees from the summer sea ; and she knew that she loved him still. Then she would set to work once more and control herself, and laboriously piece together the flimsy network.

So it went on for a month. She had received one letter from Mrs. Russell, written after their arrival in Rome. It was full of affectionate inquiries and of

anticipations of meeting in the spring. But Helen shook her head. 'I shall be at work long before then,' she said to herself. Her correspondence about her hospital nursing had come to a point now, and she was to start in a fortnight for London, to begin her training.

It was a lovely afternoon in December. For some days past there had been rough weather, south-westerly winds and rain. Now there was not a breath of wind, the sun was shining, and the bay was blue; it seemed more like July than midwinter. Helen had walked into the town and done some business, and she was tempted to go on along the sea-wall towards the railway station. The tide was low, and the water broke with a gentle murmur on the wet sands. Higher up on the sand, under the sea-wall, some boys were playing stump-cricket; and walking along the high pavement in front of her Helen saw little Ethel Henderson.

Ethel was, as usual, doing something her nurse had told her not to do. It is impossible for children to obey people who are always saying 'Don't,' and Ethel had given up trying. Now she was throwing a ball for Jack to run after. It was a new India-rubber ball with a gorgeously painted landscape on it, which Ethel had just bought, and the nurse strongly disapproved of her throwing it into the road. Ethel continued to throw it, much to her own enjoyment and Jack's, until Helen had nearly caught them up.

Then she threw it again. The ball ran along under the high pavement, with Jack in hot pursuit, until it came to a large ungrated drain-hole, into which it rolled and disappeared. Jack stood over the hole barking, and Ethel went and looked into it, but could see nothing. As Helen came up Ethel was beginning to cry with anger and regret, and the nurse was on the pavement above, scolding. 'There, I told you so. You're a very naughty girl, Miss Ethel, and it serves you right.' Ethel answered hotly, and Helen interposed.

'My goodness, what is all this about?' she said, jumping down from the pavement close to where Ethel was standing; 'what has happened, Ethel?' The child told her, and Helen looked down and could see nothing. 'Never mind, dear,' she said; 'I expect those holes run out under the wall. Perhaps we may find it down on the sand. Let's try.'

The wall was too thick to see over, so they walked back to some steps, and got on to the sand and came round. There were the drain-holes, and Helen clambered over the rough stones on to the sloping foot of the wall, and looked into two of them. She could see nothing of the ball; but then she thought of looking a little way off, and there it was on the sand, twenty yards away. Then there was joy where grief had been, and the two returned to the road. 'Let's throw it again,' Ethel said, as they came up the steps, 'and make it go through again. It's such

fun. Jack looked so surprised, and nurse will be so cross.'

'I don't think I would if I were you. It might stick another time, and then you would lose it. You would not like that, would you ?'

'No, I shouldn't.'

Then Helen stepped out upon the pavement, and as she did so she started and coloured. She knew him directly her eyes fell upon him, though he had passed the opening and was ten yards away, walking towards the town. That straight square-shouldered figure and slow firm stride were like no other man's. It was all over, of course, and she did not really care ; but somehow her heart was beating wildly again, and she longed, though she feared, to see him turn and recognise her. He did not turn, but went straight on and passed out of sight, and her heart sank. Then Helen walked home. She had to pass through the town, and until she had done so she was troubled ; but they did not meet, and she reached home alone.

That evening she was very restless. She tried hard to reason with herself. Very likely she might not see him at all ; and if she did it was useless. He might call and talk to her for a few minutes, and then he would be gone again. No, she would not think of it. He did not care for her, that was clear enough. She would not make herself miserable about him. It would really be better if he did not come. If she saw him again it would be all the harder to forget him.

And yet she would like to see him just once, for a few minutes, and shake hands and say good-bye. She tried to read, and could not ; so she went to her piano and began playing. Her thoughts went round the old subject still, but she played on mechanically, and in time the music had its effect upon her. It soothed her, and revived the feeling of somewhat romantic self-devotion with which she had begun to regard her future work. Unconsciously she passed from Schubert and Mendelssohn into some of her old church music, and as she did so she became more quiet and content ; the words of the hymns rose in her mind and filled her heart. She passed from one to another until she struck the first chord of one she had never much cared for—‘Thy will be done.’ She played it over verse by verse to the end. Then she sat motionless with her fingers upon the keys, and the sound of the soft low notes died slowly away.

It had come to her at last, borne on the wings of the music, the lesson she had to learn ; the lesson that had cost her so many cruel sorrows ; the lesson that Roland had tried to teach her in his blundering, youthful way. When she went up to her room her heart was at rest. She could kneel and say it honestly at last, and she did say it—‘Not what I will, O Lord ; what Thou wilt.’ Then she slept peacefully, like a child.

CHAPTER LI

WAS EVER WOMAN IN THIS HUMOUR WOOED ?

IN the morning Helen woke with a sudden recollection of what had passed the night before. She lay still for a time and collected herself for what might be before her, and when she got up she was quite steady. She would make no difference in her daily employments. She would not be restless and miserable. She would go about her usual work, and control herself. It would have been easier if the work had been heavier; but she managed to employ herself until lunch-time. After lunch she had to go to a sick child whom she had promised to see that day. It was perhaps not unnatural that she faltered a little as she went upstairs to get ready. She felt inclined to give up the visit, or at least to linger as long as she could before setting out. However, she repressed the inclination. 'Poor little fellow ! How horrid of me !' she said to herself.

When she came down she was, as usual, daintily dressed. She had never permitted herself, or had any desire, to become slovenly in this respect. It would

have been painful, almost impossible, to her to dress badly. As Helen walked out of the gateway of Burnbraes and turned to her right, up the hill, she saw Henry Russell coming towards her. He was a hundred yards off, but there was no mistaking his tall figure and his walk. When he came up to her she had forgotten all her resolutions, and her heart was beating hard, and her eyes were almost afraid to meet his; but being a woman, she was to all outward appearance cool and unmoved. She was, in fact, too cool, too indifferent in her manner. She could not honestly pretend to be surprised at seeing him, and the want of surprise made her seem as if she did not care. 'How are you?' she said as they met, and shook hands. 'Are you staying here?'

How cold it sounded. How cold it felt to him. He had come that day meaning to tell her he loved her; but he read indifference, or rather a frank and careless liking, in every word and gesture; and he recoiled again, proud and disheartened. 'I am only here for a few days,' he said; 'I am staying with the Hutchinsons.'

'Were you coming to see me now?'

'Yes.'

'How good of you to remember me in my solitude. Will you come back?'

'No; you were going out. Don't let me stop you.'

'I was only going to see one of my poor children. I can go later. I did not fix any hour.'

‘May I come with you?’ he said. It was a pleasure to be with her, and there would be no object in going back to her house for a few minutes before she started again. He could say nothing to her now. How was he to know that the graceful self-possessed lady who stood before him without a sign of embarrassment in her face was worshipping him with all the reckless passion of a woman’s heart?

‘Of course, I shall be very glad,’ she answered; ‘but it is a long way.’

‘The longer the better. I want a walk.’

In her momentary happiness Helen laughed outright.

‘Why do you laugh?’

‘It was so like you. I thought you were going to pay me a real compliment, and then you spoilt it so completely.’

‘I am afraid I am not happy at compliments. Have you begun your nursing work?’

‘No, not till next month. I am only going to see a poor little boy who is ill and can’t leave his bed. He has been weakly all his life, and now he has something wrong with his hip, and they say it is hopeless, that he will always be a cripple. He is so good and patient, poor little fellow. His father is a labourer, and he has no comforts or pleasures. It seems very hard.’

‘Yes; it is difficult to understand why such things are allowed.’

‘I often wonder, but it must be made up to him some day.’

‘That is one way of looking at it; but it strikes some people,—for instance, I think it struck your old enemy Samuel Johnson—in the opposite sense, as proving the possibility of predestination and eternal punishment. One thing seems not more unjust than the other.’ Russell’s mind had become accustomed to handle these weighty subjects, and he used at times to pick them up unconsciously in the course of conversation, in a way that made one feel a little nervous.

‘Surely you don’t believe that horrible doctrine?’

‘No, I don’t; but logically I do not see any reason why it should not be true.’ It was rather funny. He had started to propose to Helen, and instead of proposing he was talking to her about eternal damnation. His mind was not very quick to see the ludicrous side of a thing, but the incongruity struck him, and he went on with a smile in his eyes: ‘I certainly don’t cling to the doctrine, as a friend of mine once told me he did.’

‘What did he mean?’

‘He was speaking of some one he disliked, and he said that the man made him cling to the doctrine of eternal damnation.’

‘I am glad I don’t hate any one like that. It must make one very miserable.’

‘I don’t think he meant it quite; but certainly nothing pays so badly as hating people. One sees it

very much with jealous men. They give themselves so much unnecessary misery. I sometimes think we soldiers are specially given to professional jealousy.'

'Oh, why? Surely the *camaraderie* among soldiers is proverbial?'

'Yes; on service at all events. But ambition is the soldier's characteristic too. You remember how Shakespeare dwells on that; and though he can't describe a fight, he describes a soldier to the life. Ambition is a dangerous feeling.'

'A man is not worth much without it. Surely it can be pure and noble?'

'I am not at all sure that it can. It is "the last infirmity of noble mind," but it is an infirmity. It is not noble in itself.'

'I do not believe anything would be done in the world without it.'

'Oh, there is no doubt that it is the cause of many great deeds; perhaps of most. "Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise." Many men will do for ambition what they will not do for duty.'

'Then it must surely be a good thing.'

'I suppose it is not an unmixed evil. It brings good. If men will not do great things for duty's sake, they had better do them for their own sake than fold their hands and not do them at all.'

'It seems to me that a man must have an extraordinarily strong sense of duty to be able to dispense with ambition altogether.'

‘Perhaps; but still one ought not to require it; and it is a dangerous thing. I think one ought to try to repress it.’

‘But is it not perfectly natural that a man should care for the good opinion of his countrymen?’

‘Perfectly natural, I think, but not noble. It is natural to wish for money, or any other pleasant thing, and I suppose the wish for money has had a great deal to do with the making of England. It has created our trade and our wealth. But at best that does not make the wish for money noble; and at worst it may be very ignoble and harmful. Directly one begins to want money very much one is apt to become mean and unscrupulous in getting it. It is the same with other things.’

‘I hope that is not quite true. I hope one can wish for things and yet not do wrong to get them.’

‘I can only judge by what I feel. I know that in my own case ambition is a temptation. On service, for instance, I feel that I should be tempted to sacrifice men’s lives without compunction to gain my object.’

‘But it is necessary to be able to do that.’

‘Yes; but one should only be able to do it, not be inclined to do it.’

‘I think you are too severe altogether. You expect ideal strength and perfection.’

‘Perhaps; but personally I feel that ambition is bad for me. It makes me unjust, and everything I

should wish not to be. What is ambition literally? Going about—to get on. That cannot be noble. A man should go straight.'

'But that may mean not going at all. You can't go straight against a head wind. You must go about to get on.'

'That is rather good; but you don't mean it. Getting on is not everything in life, whatever it may be at sea. Surely it will be far better than any success when the end comes a few years hence, surely it is better always, to be able to feel, "Well, I have held my head up all through. I have never shrunk from a fight, and never asked a favour."

'Isn't that rather——'

'What?'

'Rather an *ungracious* creed?'

'Perhaps. Yes, I suppose it is.'

They walked on in silence for a time. Helen's thoughts were going back over what they had said. 'I cannot believe it is bad to be ambitious. I should be sorry if any one I cared about were not ambitious. If you have a strong sense of duty you can control ambition.'

'Possibly. I daresay it is better to have all the human qualities if you can keep them in order, but they are apt to run away with you.'

'I am sure it is better to have them. They all mean force. Some men may have too much force, but I am sure most men have too little.'

They went on together until they came to the sick child's house. 'May I come back for you?' Russell said.

'Have you nothing else to do?'

'No, nothing. How long shall you be?'

'About a quarter of an hour.'

Poor little Tom Barrett found his visit very short that day, and Helen felt guilty, and promised him another. Ambition and eternal punishment are curiously interesting subjects in certain circumstances. When Helen came out Russell was waiting for her.

'I'm not late, am I?' she said.

'No; very punctual. How is the child?'

'Just the same, poor little fellow. He is so cheerful and good. I think he is really glad at the idea of dying. He talks and asks questions about it exactly as other children do about some delightful place they are going to. He looks upon it simply as falling asleep, to wake in a wonderful bright land where he will have perfect happiness for ever.'

'Which I suppose you have taught him to believe.'

'I have tried to help in teaching it him.'

'It is a grand belief for those who are lucky enough to have it.'

'You speak as if you did not believe it yourself.'

'I should be very sorry if I did not believe it, or something like it. But I do find it very difficult to realise such a thing practically, as that child does.'

Helen was silent, and he went on: 'Who would

not realise it if he could ? It would make everything so easy. That kind of faith gives one a backbone that nothing else can give. "Thus did the martyrs die, I see, little to lose and muckle to win."

'That is a very low view of martyrdom, isn't it ?'

'Perhaps; but it seems to be a logical view. However, it is no use talking about logical views in religious matters. Logic only seems to me to bring one up against a blank wall.'

'I don't understand you.'

'I mean, for example, that so far as my logic goes I can find no sufficient ground, believing in the existence of the human will. I cannot get out of the chain of reasoning by which all our actions are made out to be the result of external forces acting on a given nature.'

'I never could believe that. It always seemed to me a mere trick of words, that clever people must be able to expose.'

'I don't believe it either in reality. My instinct revolts against it. I was only saying that logic, my logic at least, lands me there, however hard I try.'

'Have you not a right to fall back on instinct if reason leads you into impossible positions ?'

'That is what I have thought. You cannot solve the commonest question of human conduct by pure reasoning,—at least I cannot. For instance, my reason does not tell me clearly when it is justifiable to deceive, or how much we ought to give in charity. One has to rely on something other than reason in these matters.'

Perhaps we were meant to see that our reason is insufficient with regard to the greatest matter of all, and that we must rely on something else there also. But one feels that that argument is dangerous. It may be merely a shrinking from the truth in favour of what is pleasant, or a sort of unconscious attempt to "hedge," to keep on the orthodox side in case of accidents. Besides, different men seem to have different instincts.'

'It must be very miserable not to feel sure. I can't reason it out, and yet I feel as sure of free will and a future state and Christianity as I do that I am alive.'

'I am not miserable. I do not disbelieve. I feel sure there is an omnipotent and just deity. I only cannot understand and clearly realise. I wish I could.'

Helen longed to be able to help him, but she knew that she could not. He must work it out for himself, and she felt sure he would in the end. Still, it was a distress to her. 'I wish I could help you,' she said gently. Russell saw that she was interested and sorry now, and for an instant he was tempted to take advantage of this to try whether he could not win her through her pity and faith. It was only for an instant. His pride recoiled from the hypocrisy of such an attempt.

'I won't stoop even for her,' he said to himself, 'and I won't disturb her belief if I can help it.'

They walked on for a time in silence. They had settled to return home by the sea, and they were now in the road which leads from Anstis Cove through the fields to the Meadfoot beach. To right and left, on the hill-sides, there was some gorse in blossom. Before them lay the bay and Berry Head. A sheep-dog came running down from a field on their left and barked at Rex, who took no notice ; but it turned their thoughts. ‘ Let us get up on the hill,’ Russell said. ‘ We ought to have a beautiful view to-day.’

They walked up to Helen’s favourite spot and stopped. The sun was warm and bright. There was hardly any wind, and what there was was off shore. Helen thought of the first time they had stood there together in February ; of the waves breaking on the foot of the Thatcher, and racing into the mouth of the bay. Now the sea was calm, and the rocks below showed purple through the clear still water, no longer churned into foaming breakers. Two French fishing-boats, which had taken shelter in Torbay from the south-west gales, were now going out again. Helen knew them of old by their dirty white canvas, their high bowsprits and heavy build. It was a Saturday, and the Brixham trawlers were coming in. There were a dozen or more making for Berry Head, with the sun on their tan sails. Two steamers were still lying under the point. There had been a number there until the day before. They looked very high out of the water. ‘ Our modern steamers are very

ugly,' Helen said. ' How beautiful a fleet of old men-of-war would have looked sailing into the bay ! '

' Yes ; and it is so short a time since the days of the three-deckers. It is not seventy years since Napoleon was lying out there in the *Northumberland*. What a tragedy that was ! '

Helen woke up from her dream of white sails and broadsides. ' Ah, do you admire him too ? ' she said. ' He has always had an overpowering fascination for me. If I had been a man I would have followed him anywhere. It was like the French to desert him after he had carried their Eagles into every capital in Europe. And now they can find no insult too great for his memory. They are not worthy of him, and never were.'

' I don't think you are quite fair. His victories ended by bringing the allied armies into Paris, and the French had suffered terribly, and were very weary of war. Besides, though he was a great soldier, he was not admirable in some ways. He was selfish and unscrupulous, and in some ways, I think, very mean.'

' I suppose you are thinking of Joséphine ; but if she really cared for him she must have been glad to stand out of his way.'

' That does not excuse him, rather the contrary. But I always felt the attraction too. He dealt with great things, and his character and his times are intensely interesting to me.'

‘Could he have been what he was without ambition?’

‘I don’t think you are very happy there. If ever there was a case in which ambition brought evil on the world it was his. I never denied that ambition was a force. I said it was a dangerous force. He bought his glory very dear, at the expense of the nation.’

‘The nation shared his glory. Of course they had to pay something for it. I do not think they were much to be pitied.’

‘Don’t speak like that. I don’t like to hear you say those flippant things.’

‘Colonel Russell!’

‘I don’t; it is not like you. You do not know how horrible war is, or you could not.’

‘You a soldier and say that!’

‘I say it just because I am a soldier, and have seen war. I don’t think I feel very strongly about men being killed. They must die, and it makes little difference whether they die a few years sooner or later. But the misery inflicted on innocent women and children, and the pain and disease and suffering of all kinds which a great war involves, are something very awful. Nations have to go through it, and I believe occasional war is necessary to maintain a nation’s character, but it is a horrible necessity. It is not a thing to laugh at.’

Helen felt wounded; he might have spared her

that,—her of all women; but she answered humbly enough: 'I did not mean to laugh at war. At all events he has left a splendid example of what a man can do by force of brain and will and courage.'

'And unscrupulousness.'

Helen was silent.

After a time Russell said: 'Do you think his career is one to make men ambitious?'

'Yes, more so than any in history. If not, what career could do so?'

'I am not sure. I think it has the opposite effect on me. It used to fill my head with dreams; but now when I think of the young artillery officer conquering Europe and giving away kingdoms it represses my ambition. After that, what is the use of such success as is possible to us? What is it to secure a few lines in that long romance which is called history, to be one of innumerable K.C.B.'s, or even to win a peerage? Those are such little things. He distributed dukedoms in handfuls.'

'It was very wonderful. It always rejoices me to think of all those haughty emperors and kings bowing down before the *petit caporal*.'

'What a Radical you are.'

'No, I am not; but I cannot help having some of the pride of the sword. And they were so insolent, and so stupid and cruel. I can never forgive the Bourbons for shooting Ney.'

'It was not much worse than shooting the Duc

d'Enghien, if as bad. But I used to feel exactly as you do ; and even now all my sympathy is with Napoleon, though my reason is against him. One cannot help feeling deeply for him when one thinks of the contrast between his former greatness and his miserable solitude and death at St. Helena ; though I have no doubt that Irish traitor O'Meara made things out much worse than they were.'

' You are always hard on the Irish. Do you think it is fair ? '

' Perhaps not. But, as a matter of fact, many of the Irish *are* traitors, who ought to be shot ; and I believe O'Meara was one of them.'

Helen went back to her Emperor. ' At all events,' she said, ' if I were French I should be very proud of Napoleon.'

' Do you never think of the other side of the question ? It seems to me that we have more reason to be proud than any one. Nothing the French did for him was so fine as our stand against him, for nearly twenty years, when all Europe was at his feet, and we were a little nation of ten millions of men. It always rejoices me to think how we " pestilent islanders " went on fighting, with our old contempt for numbers and prestige, hardening our hearts as things grew worse, and never giving in.'

' Yes ; it was grand. I wonder whether we should fight like that still. I get frightened sometimes at what one hears and reads about the mob. I think it

would break my heart if we disgraced ourselves and gave in to an enemy, and sank as Spain and Holland have done.'

'Don't let those doubts come to you,' Russell said, and as he spoke his head went up and his eyes were alight with enthusiasm. 'Englishmen are the same as they always were,—the best fighting race in the world, the only civilised race that really loves a fight. I should feel there was nothing worth living for if I did not believe in the future of England. People talk of a democracy not fighting. Was there ever any finer fighting since the world began than the fighting in the American War? Think how they set their teeth and stuck to it on both sides,—Lincoln and Davis, and Grant and Sherman, and Jackson and Lee, and the hundreds of thousands of men in the blue and the gray who fell into line as the war went on. The fighting blood was just as strong in them as it was in their ancestors two hundred years before. It warms my heart to read of them all, with their English names, and English speech, and English ways, and dogged English pluck; and I feel as proud of the Stars and Stripes as I do of the Union Jack. I look forward to the time when all the empty places of the earth will be filled with Englishmen, banded together for good against the world. I wish there were more room for the race to spread. There is no other to compare with it, none. Only Englishmen must believe in themselves, and Englishwomen must believe in us.'

He stopped, with a look of slight confusion, and turned away. 'I am really unpardonable,' he said. 'You must not get me on that subject.'

But she broke in impetuously. 'Ah, don't be ashamed of it! I wish all Englishmen were like you. I should have no fear then.'

Something in the ring of her voice caught his ear, and he turned and looked at her. A deep flush sprang to her face and crimsoned her neck and ears, and her eyes fell; but for an instant he had met the look in them, and it had been enough. A tide of unexpected joy flooded his heart. 'My darling!' he said, with a sudden vehement pride and wonder, and she did not rebuke him. Then, with the confidence of a man taking what was his own, he laid his hand upon the little gloved hands that were crossed beside him: 'My darling! look at me.'

She hesitated, and then looked up obediently into the glad, strong face above her, and he knew he could do with her what he would.

It was no place to stay now, and he said, 'Let us go on. I may come home with you for a little?'

'Yes,' she said; and as she turned she looked at the sea, and the rocks in the calm water, and the long blue line of Berry Head. The whole picture stamped itself on her brain in colours that would never fade.

They did not say much as they walked on; but when the door of Helen's drawing-room had closed upon them she understood, what she had dimly sus-

pected before, the depth of fiery passion that underlay that grave exterior. It almost frightened her, but it was a very happy fear.

When he had gone the thought came over her that she had given herself away unasked. 'I don't care,' she said to herself; 'he does love me.'

Her self-surrender was too complete and joyful to leave any room for shame. Perhaps it even increased her happiness to feel that she had laid her heart at his feet. He was so big and noble. What was she that she should think of having lowered herself? She was not worthy to be his slave. 'He said he would never ask a favour,' she thought; 'I am glad he never asked it, even from me.' The shame might have come later if he had been other than he was, but she was safe with him. The strong natures among men have the womanly quality of loving more, not less, because they are loved.

That night Helen told the one real friend she had near her. Rex knew already, and was inclined to disapprove. Old Pow did not know, and was much too respectful to show any signs of curiosity; but she had seen Henry Russell leave the house, and there was something in Helen's eyes and manner that night at dinner which was unusual. Pow longed to see Helen happy, and she was attracted by the tall, soldierly man, with his courteous ways and look of command. Her hopes rose.

After dinner Helen sat playing quietly to herself.

The happiness in her heart was welling up in music. She played on for an hour or more, and then she rang the bell. Pow came up herself as usual, and found Helen standing by the fire. 'Shut the door, Pow,' she said, 'and come here.'

Power obeyed.

'Pow, I have got something to tell you.'

'Have you, ma'am? I hope it's something good.'

The little brown eyes were dancing with pleasure. She could see it was 'something good.'

'It is something very good, Pow. I am the happiest woman in the whole world, and I felt I could not go to bed without telling you. Now you know, don't you?'

'Oh, ma'am, I am so glad! I am so glad!' Her voice was trembling, and the brown eyes looked up at Helen with a pathetic glory of tenderness and love.

'There is no one else to wish me joy, Pow—no one but Rex, and he is cross. You might give me a kiss, I think.'

And Helen stooped to the little white head before her, and old Pow's trembling hands held hers, and old Pow's kiss fell on her forehead. 'Eh, ma'am, I am so glad! I am so glad! God bless you, dear ma'am!'

CHAPTER LII

AT LAST

HENRY RUSSELL and Helen were married a few weeks later.

When Lady Mary heard of the marriage, her heart grew hard against Guy's wife. To forget him so soon, when he had given up all for her sake, and gone to his death for her! Lady Mary hated her with a fierce hatred, and believed that she did well to be angry. Poor Lady Mary, hers is a sad life now, and her face shows it.

Another woman heard of the marriage too, and wept bitterly. 'Oh, how could she! How could she! Why did she take him from me if she did not love him?'

And yet Helen had loved him well. Was her whole life to be sacrificed to the memory of his? Was she to have no happiness in all the years to come? Should her heart have been incapable of another love? Yes? Well, yes perhaps; but Nature says plain, No. These things have been and are, and will be still, so long as earth endures.

Hugh Dale understood, though his loyal heart was sore for a time. 'I never thought she would marry again,' he said. 'Poor old Guy! That long staff-college prig too.' But he got over his first feeling of indignation. After all, she was a dear woman, and he was a fine soldier; and you could not wish her to be alone all her life.

And Mrs. Aylmer understood. Knowing her views about these matters, Helen had found it hard to write to her; and at first she found it hard to answer, but her answer in the end was very gentle and loving. Helen knew that she had not lost her friend.

It was a happy marriage. Henry Russell makes more friends now, and fewer enemies. He is as determined as ever, but less proud, less unbending, more conciliatory. That he owes to his wife.

And she owes him more, she thinks, than she can ever repay. It seems to her that as the little *Swallow* came that autumn evening out of the fierce buffeting of the wind and sea into the shelter of gray Pendennis, so she has come from the storms and sorrows of life safe into the shelter of that great constant love. All is well with her at last.

THE END

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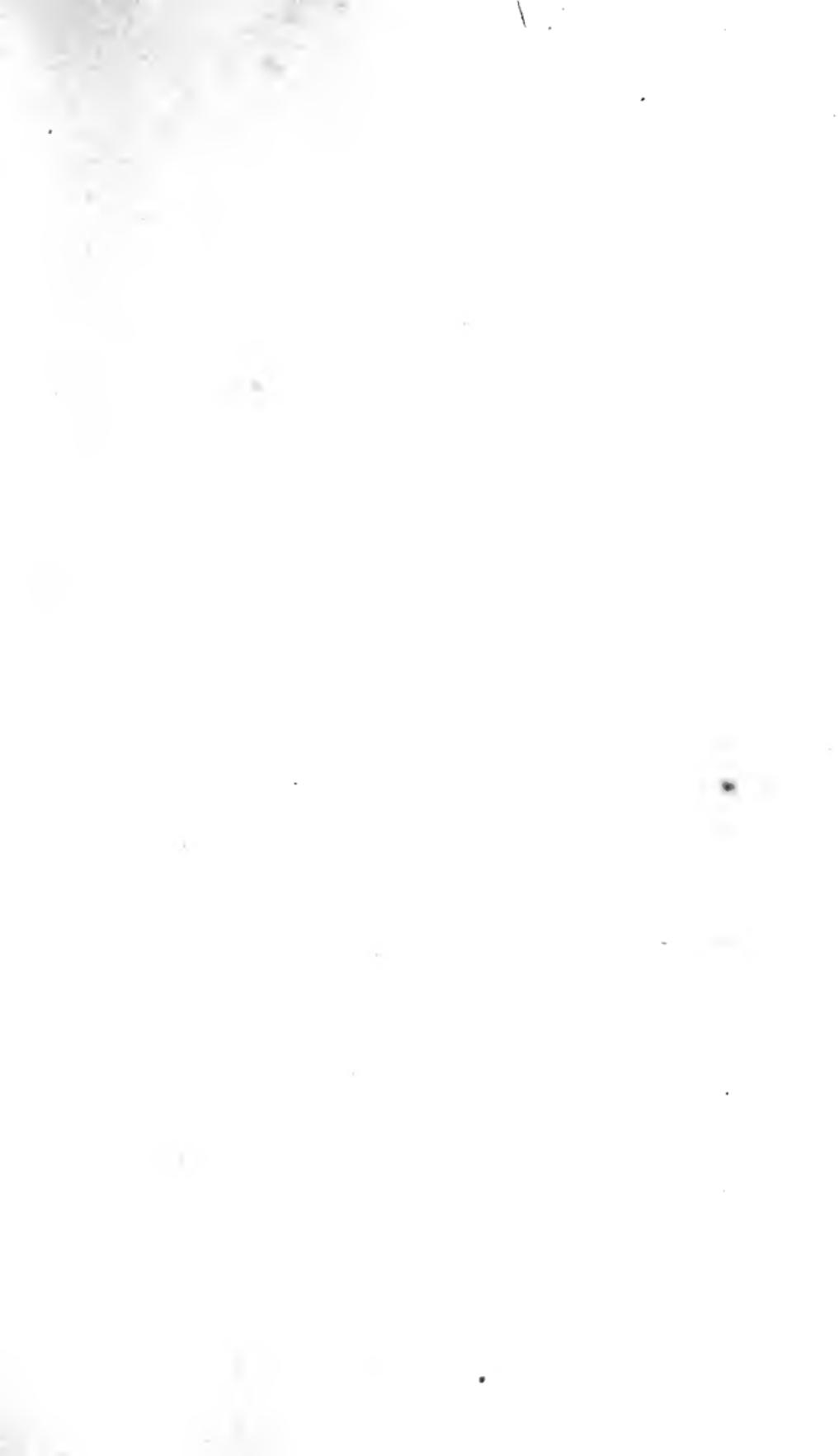
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